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## DEBONNAIRE

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### CHAPTER I.

THE governor stood up, glass in hand.

"Gentlemen, I pledge you a welcome."

His guests, rising, drank deep in response, some with an air, others in frank contempt of courtly usage.

Then again the shapes of their scabards scraped on the floor, chairs were drawn back into place, and the dinner of greeting given by the Governor of Canada to the far-famed regiment of Carignan-Salières proceeded with animation.

The chill of the fog without was banished from the heart of the silent château, which seemed aware of the fact that here at its board were not only its new defenders—brave men all—but men with the old free blood in their veins, hot from the mother country. Many a priest had come in the past and welcome, but the soldier it was who brought the jollity.

Outside in the town the rank and file were being fêted. Even this stern settlement of the church militant had relaxed to ribald mirth. This night at least should be one of reckless abandon. Up from the ships in the river came fresh supplies—news, friends, letters. Even the zeal of the zealots was turned from its customary trend. Even the

governor himself—a stanch upholder of the church—indulged in an hour's leeway.

Seldom before had the grim hall worn so hospitable an aspect. Until now its vast tomblike solitude had seemed a ghostly habitation, but tonight it glowed with a warm cheer, the fire blazed and roared, the candles flared gayly until the grain of the somber wainscot no longer suggested ghostly figures, but faces wrinkling with laughter.

The dinner ended with a good-by to formality, but not to wine. They sat about their glasses in broad good humor, and while their tobacco smoke rose in clouds to the beams above, the stilts of their talk were cast aside for the easier level of soldier gossip.

Capt. de Chamby, gracefully filling a long clay pipe with his tapering fingers, was regaling the governor with a military reminiscence.

"And then, monsieur, what next? First the Frondeurs throw stones at the good people of Paris. 'Charity begins at home,' says the king; 'kill them immediately.' And we do so in bountiful measure."

De Chamby paused and puffed solemnly, while his brother officers boisterously applauded the diverting adventure. With a grave face the captain continued:

"Next the polite Austrians say, 'Gentlemen, kindly deal thus and so with an army of Turks that annoys us.' As a matter of courtesy we comply."

At this the governor, warming to his guests, cried a "Bravo!" and "*Vive le régiment de Carignan-Salières!*"

Then Varennes, a young lieutenant, who looked like a fop, yet could fight, it was said, like a fiend of the nether region, took up the tale.

"True it is, being idle at the time, we acceded to the Austrians' demands. 'Good,' observes his majesty of France. 'You do well as foreign missionaries. Pray, go to Quebec, and convert the Iroquois into dead Catholics.'

As usual, Varennes had capped the dry drollery of De Chamby with a witty climax. Certain scruples, however, on the governor's part as to the propriety of the witticism held his approval down to a covert smile. This piquant thrust at conversion by the sword might have been construed on a less convivial occasion into something dangerously akin to *lèse majesté*.

And the liegelings of Louis Quatorze did well to be sticklers in such matters. The Sieur de Courcelle considered it advisable to resume a show of formality. Again he rose, and this time his glass was directed to a guest at the foot of the banqueting table, who, for the most part, had maintained a taciturn speech.

"Messieurs, I drink to your colonel."

The commanding officer rose with the rest. His face and frame had the iron-like strength of a Norman.

They toasted him in unison. "Col. de Salières!"

"I thank you," he replied, simply. "Later we shall respond in good earnest with *this*." He touched his sword hilt. "My brothers, a pledge of loyalty to his excellency, Daniel de Rémy, Sieur de Courcelle, Governor of Canada."

As they drank and reseated themselves, the colonel glanced uneasily at the great doorway.

"There is yet another I would toast; but, unfortunately, he still is absent."

"Ah!" cried Varennes, "Capt. Louis le Debonnaire! *Mère de Dieu!* a din-

ner is scarcely a dinner without him. We are deprived of the *pièce de résistance*."

"Louis le Debonnaire!" exclaimed the governor. "Was not this the soubriquet of that old-time monarch, the first of all the Louis—a noble king—"

"Yes," said Varennes; "'twas from him we borrowed the nickname. The name of a noble king well fits a kingly noble. But where in the world can he be?"

"Perhaps he is not in the world," said De Chamby, dry as a bone. "Perhaps he has gone to the devil."

Varennes tittered. "To settle old scores. An affair of honor merely."

"*Sacré nom!*" exclaimed another. "It may be he's forgot the dinner entirely. His memory was never the longest."

Daniel de Rémy scowled. "What! Forgotten my dinner?"

"Nay, your excellency," said the colonel, quickly. "It cannot be. I trust your excellency will overlook the captain's vagaries when you come to know him as we do. We have aptly named him Le Debonnaire." He smiled grimly, relaxing into momentary mirth. "By Heaven, at first sight you might take him for a popinjay."

"Ay," said Varennes. "He carries a lute hung to his neck like any troubadour."

"And plays the wounded prisoners to sleep after battle," added De Chamby.

"True," allowed the colonel. "But, your excellency, my captain's no mere pigeon-hearted tunester, I do assure you. He carries also a rapier."

"A rapier!"

"Yes. 'A sword,' he says, 'requires less art and subtlety in the handling.'"

"Hum; you interest me in your popinjay," cried the Sieur de Courcelle. "I'm impatient to see this wonder." He turned to the lackey behind his chair. "Go seek Capt. le Debonnaire, and learn what it is detains him. No—stay—I will send him a command by my own hand." With which condescension the governor rose, and made for an anteroom. "One moment, gentlemen."

When he had left them, Varennes

winked at the table, and then of a sudden the officers sat up alert, and the lieutenant, hand to ear, exclaimed: "Listen—the troubadour!"

The colonel frowned. "Devil take Debonnaire. Comes tripping it lightly when the dinner is over, and with a song on his lips!"

The sound of a voice singing came nearer. In the banqueting hall the officers listened. The voice was always music to their ears.

I am Louis le Debonnaire,  
Captain of Carignan-Salières,  
Singer of songs—a bird in air—  
Lover of strife and devil-may-care—  
Lover of life—the world is fair—  
So sings Louis le Debonnaire.

"Thus he sang it," said Varennes, "at Versailles, before the king."

Louis de Cadillac, nicknamed the Debonnaire, stood in the great doorway, lute in hand, cloaked and hatted as gayly as though in the Luxembourg gardens of a summer's afternoon. As he finished the song he dropped them the bow of a court quadrille, and unslinging his lute gave it with his hat and cloak to his lackey, Pierre le Coq. Bestowing a touch here and there to the frills at his wrists and throat, the exquisite entered with an air so affected, a step so artificial (thanks to the height of his heels) that even Paris itself was here outdone—here on the edge of the wilderness, where life was more than a game.

On noticing the vacant chair at the table's head, the delinquent guest inquired lightly concerning his host's absence.

"His excellency was weary of waiting," said De Salières. "I trust you can explain your seeming slight."

"Oh, certainly, my colonel." Debonnaire seated himself at the table, and summoning one of the serving men calmly bade the fellow make haste with dinner.

The others started, appalled by this piece of effrontry—all save Lieut. Varennes, whose rosy cheeks were flushed with admiration, to say nothing

of Bordeaux. "Another escapade, eh, my captain? Another wild whimsy?"

"Nothing of the sort, my angel," said the chevalier, as the awestruck flunkey served him. "It was thus, messieurs. I had just neared the château in good time for dinner, when instantly I faced about, and returned forthwith to the ship."

As he made this enigmatical beginning the governor entered, and paused on the threshold of the anteroom unobserved.

"Aha, some mystery afoot, I'll wager," laughed Varennes.

"Not at all, my seraph," said Debonnaire, smiling pleasantly. "Merely a lapse of memory, messieurs. To be exact, I had forgotten to bring"—he took a sip of wine—"a snuffbox."

Before the others could restrain their scandalized laughter, the governor started forward, with affronted dignity. "What—a snuffbox!"

The laughter ceased abruptly. Debonnaire rose and eyed the newcomer coolly. "Pardon, m'sieur, but you are a stranger to me."

The colonel, in alarm, sprang up. "Permit me." Then to Louis, in a quick whisper: "It is his excellency."

Debonnaire bowed very low. "Ah, m'sieur; now not *one*, but a thousand pardons."

"Hum. So you stayed away from my dinner for a mere snuffbox?" returned De Rémy, not yet pacified.

Debonnaire slipped a hand into his pocket, and drawing out the cause of his tardiness, regarded it regretfully.

"A very valuable snuffbox, your excellency." He took a pinch of the contents, and dusted a speck or two from his frills with graceful fingers. "And most delectable snuff. May I offer—"

"Insolence!"

Debonnaire started back. Swiftly his hand sought his rapier. "M'sieur!" A foot or two of steel gleamed in the light of the candelabra as he half drew it. His brother officers pressed forward fearfully. A moment and he had resumed his former nonchalance; the gleam at his side disappeared.

But already the governor had turned sternly to Col. de Salières.

"I had not looked to see your captain's rapier thus. This is a matter for court-martial."

Debonnaire raised his eyebrows as if in surprise.

"Court-martial? For denying myself a dinner and considering your excellency's pleasure, you would have me court-martialed? In any other save the Sieur de Courcelle, I would consider this ingratitude; nay, more—" He shrugged with an offended air.

"Speak out," cried De Rémy, shifting uneasily.

"Yes, in Heaven's name!" demanded the colonel.

Debonnaire smiled indulgently, as if at an exhibition of puerile chagrin.

"The fault of speech is not mine, your excellency. As I began to observe, I forgot to bring this valuable snuffbox—"

He toyed with the golden bauble, and the governor, losing all patience, turned in despair to De Salières:

"He delights in repeating the insult. Surely, this is no apology?"

"In truth," interposed Debonnaire, before his superior could answer for him, "I have no other—the snuffbox—" but he was not allowed to proceed.

"Colonel," cried the governor, now determined to maintain his dignity; "I demand that you immediately—"

"Stay, I pray," said Debonnaire, with ingratiating suavity. "The snuffbox, your excellency, is a present to you from a distant cousin of mine."

De Rémy's lip curled.

"*Dieu!* now he attempts flattery. Cousin, indeed!"

"My cousin," said Debonnaire, holding out the snuffbox with a low obeisance, "the king of France!"

## CHAPTER II.

The Sieur de Courcelle started in surprise, then a smile of tickled vanity, of puffing, though pardonable pride, spread over and transformed his fea-

tures. His eyes were gazing with fascination at the gift.

"From his majesty! Is it possible? From his majesty, the king?"

"As I said," observed Debonnaire, with airy impudence; "a distant cousin of the Cadillacs."

His excellency reached out a hand, and received the inestimable present.

"But why did you not explain in the first place?"

"Oh, m'sieur, you see I am a poor hand at explanations. I can finger a lute, it's true, and play with a rapier, or—the dice, with some show of conviction, but words—" He broke off laughing, and hummed inconsequently a fleeting catch of his song:

Tra-la-la-la—a bird in air,  
Well-a-day, well—the world is fair—  
So sings Louis le Debonnaire.

Once more in the history of Louis de Cadillac, otherwise known as Le Debonnaire, and by various other soubriquets, his voice had a magical effect. Even now in the random lines its music was a potent influence. Once more to that somber old hall was the cheer restored, the cheer that came only with new-landed soldiery, only as at present before colors were faded and laughter had died in the forest silence.

Daniel de Rémy was deeply gratified.

"I must indite my thanks," said he, proudly, "to his majesty at once. *Nom de Dieu!* the first of the ships is to sail this evening." He seated himself at the head of the table, and fell to composing in his mind a fitting letter. The officers, seeing their favorite's plight, could scarcely restrain their amusement.

"The deuce!" exclaimed Debonnaire, under his breath. Then aloud: "Oh, m'sieur, his majesty said he would receive no thanks. A mere trifle—to a faithful servant. His majesty realizes that affairs of government press heavily on your excellency. I am sure; nay, positive—"

"Ah, well," said the governor, half to himself; "I will send my letter by a later vessel."

He sat looking at the snuffbox, while Debonnaire and the others, now gath-

ered near the fire, exchanged significant glances.

"Slippery ground, was it not?" whispered Louis, choosing a pipe from the mantelshelf. "Alas! my favorite snuff-box! Praise fortune, I have another."

His excellency rose from the table.

"Gentlemen, your pardon; I neglect you. Come—fill your glasses again. This is no time for formality. Tell me, Capt. de Cadillac, have you lately been in Versailles?"

Debonnaire inclined his head, and returned with his comrades to the table.

"From camp to court, from court to camp—that's the way of the chevalier, m'sieur."

De Rény sighed in reminiscence. The days of Versailles were far behind him.

"The court, I hear, is more brilliant now than ever before."

"Wanting but one luminary, m'sieur."

"Who, now?"

"I speak of Daniel de Rémy, Sieur de Courcelle, Governor of Canada!"

The others stirred slightly. In the hands of Debonnaire a compliment was no less felicitous than lute or blade.

The Sieur de Courcelle, swelling with pampered pride, bowed acknowledgment. He was resorting to the wine to-night oftener than usual. His rejoinder was a command to fill their glasses again.

"A toast, messieurs, to those fair ladies we have left behind. Gentlemen—to those who wait!"

"To those who wait," they repeated, heartily—all but Debonnaire. To their surprise they noticed that his glass remained untouched upon the table.

"What now?" said the colonel, again apprehensive.

"Do you not join us?" inquired his excellency.

"No, I cannot."

"Oh, ho!" cried Varennes. "The breaker of hearts refuses to toast the hearts he's broken. Thou faithless one!"

De Chamby joined in the laugh.

"And yet I've known him to be overgenerous to those he's worsted."

"Gentlemen," said Debonnaire, se-

verely. "How often must I tell you that I wait for no one, nor anyone for me? The toast is perhaps yours, but mine—never!"

The governor smiled blandly.

"Your name, *m'sieur le capitaine*, would be more fitting were it Friar Debonnaire."

"Who knows? Friar I may be some day. Who can tell?"

He rose, and crossed absently to one of the deep-set windows. Below him lay the river, a long stretch of silver, tranquil under the moon. The lights of the ships hung yellow against the whiter radiance of the moonlight.

Here and there a lantern moved in the streets, and above it the shadowy figure of its bearer—ghostly lights, ghostlier forms. All was impalpable, unreal. When Debonnaire turned from the window, and spoke again, his voice was low.

"Yes; friar I may be in the end. When court and camp begin to pall, what better than a monastery? 'Tis a fitting antechamber to the court of death. You sit there, and await your presentation; you learn the ways of that brilliant society into which you are soon to make your *début*—the society of Charlemagne, St. Louis, Jeanne d'Arc and his majesty of Navarre. You remember other camps and other courts, and acquit yourself accordingly. Then, when at last you're ushered from this anteroom into the presence of death, you make your entrance like a gentleman." His manner became lighter again. He waved his hand, and smiled airily. "Nay, you are even borne in like a pontiff at the mass. Then you sleep without a headache—and better still, messieurs—" he cast his eye on Pierre, now waiting his master's pleasure by the fire. "And better still, messieurs, there is no miserable valet there to awake you in the morning!"

As he paused, they laughed—save one or two, who responded to the echo of his voice. It had a tone that belied the words, a tone like the lute's when he touched it lightly. He turned again to the window. "It is for this I wait; for a light-o'-love—never!"

"Oh, come," said De Chambly. "What of your madrigals and songs of a woman's eyes? Are they sung to no one?"

Debonnaire turned slowly back to his comrades, stung by their skeptical amusement. He drew out from his breast a small object hung to a ribbon at his neck—an object flat and oval.

"I see you insist, my brothers. Well, then, though it goes sorely against the grain, I'll silence you, and be done with your badinage. Look you, messieurs, at this faded miniature."

He handed the oval to the colonel, who glanced at the face, and passed it on—each successively doing so in silent wonder.

"That face I love," said Debonnaire, "none other. A woman's face, but where's the woman? Ask of the night, ask of the air, the sea, the sky; ask of the pale cold moon above us. Messieurs, she must have entered the brilliant court I speak of, full two centuries ago. You see the hair. Thus they wore it when Louis XI. was king. Behold the eyes. Such guileless eyes are not in fashion now. This is the picture of some Mademoiselle de Cadillac, who lived long years ago. Through generations it has come down to me. Do you wonder that no other face has charms for Debonnaire?"

He paused, and was about to turn away with an unaccustomed lack of spirit, when the governor, at the far end of the table, received the miniature from De Chambly.

Suddenly De Rémy started, and gazed more closely at the face.

"Mother of Heaven!"

"No, m'sieur," corrected Debonnaire, with a touch of his unfailing humor. "Mademoiselle de Cadillac."

But the governor, too intent to heed him, was staring dumbly at the picture. "Saint——!"

Again the ghost of humor. "Surely, some saint, m'sieur."

His excellency looked up in amazement. "This is no lady of old."

"What!"

"I tell you, she is alive—she is living to-day—I swear it."

Debonnaire blew a cloud of smoke from his long clay pipe, and watched it ascend to the rafters. "Alas! too true, m'sieur, in another star."

"No, no. She is none other than Mademoiselle de Cadillac——"

"So I said, your excellency."

"Unless I am blind or mad," said the governor, staring at the miniature, "this is the niece and ward of Monsieur Raoul de Cadillac, the present French Secretary of New Amsterdam!"

A sharp snap was heard. The stem of the long clay pipe had broken in Debonnaire's fingers. He trembled. They saw him sway. Gone for an instant was all his poppery. Mademoiselle de Cadillac—alive—in New Amsterdam—impossible!

For a long moment he stood there, steadying himself with a hand on the back of his chair, stunned by the sudden news as his fellow officers took to unraveling the mystery.

"I assure you," said De Rémy, turning to them with calmer positiveness, "the likeness is perfect. And yet how strange! The miniature is certainly very old."

The colonel, who was none too quick at discoveries, had been silently pondering.

"I see," he said at last. "She must be a descendant of the original."

"Undoubtedly," drawled De Chambly. "Quite obviously."

And again Varennes capped the climax with a turn of wit.

"Another distant cousin of Debonnaire's," said he.

As the miniature was handed back to its owner, the governor, smiling, raised his glass: "Now will you drink to those who wait?"

Debonnaire caught up his glass, raised it to his lips, then suddenly hesitated, lowered it, looked off through the window, and set it down.

"No! The word 'wait' is not in my vocabulary. I ask you, my colonel, for leave of absence."

"Absence!"

"Yes, or I must forfeit my commission. A furlough now or retirement in

a fortnight—which shall it be, M'sieur de Salières?"

"Oh, it shall be a dozen furloughs, rather than retirement. But are you mad?"

For answer Debonnaire called his man from the hearthside.

"Pierre, good fool!"

"M'sieur, at your service," said the lithe little fellow, crossing hastily.

"Listen." His master spoke in quick command. "Go you at once to our ship's captain—the captain of the *St. Marie*. He lodges at the inn near by. Remind him that he owes Monsieur de Cadillac a hundred louis d'or for a little game of tables that we played together. Tell him it is nothing at all. M'sieur de Cadillac never receives such small payments. Only—mark this—the ship in sailing must not go straight to France. She must anchor just to the northward of New Amsterdam, and M'sieur de Cadillac will be on board. You understand?"

"Perfectly, m'sieur."

Cadillac frowned with mock severity. "Rascal! Have I not told you never to understand perfectly? Remember, you understand only a little—very little, indeed."

"Yes, yes; almost nothing, m'sieur."

"Quick, then—take the message at once."

"I go, m'sieur," and Pierre hurried from the hall.

Debonnaire turned to the others.

"You may be right. This mademoiselle is perhaps a cousin of mine. You say the likeness is perfect, excellency?"

"It is. I cannot be mistaken. Have I not seen mademoiselle's beauty with my own eyes?"

Debonnaire was again all nonchalance. Now that no toast was afoot he tossed off the glass of wine, and rehanging his lute, which Pierre had left, took up another pipe from the mantel.

"Gentlemen," he said, pushing down the tobacco with a dainty touch, "if what his excellency says be true, Mademoiselle de Cadillac shall be mine by Christmas."

"What?" cried the others. "Impossible!"

"Preposterous!"

"Absurd!"

The indifferent victim of these exclamations came forward to the nearest candelabrum, and lighted his pipe with easy leisure.

"As you will, messieurs."

"I fear," said the governor, half in sympathy, half in amusement, "your resolution has come to the birth too late for fruition. The attorney-general of New Amsterdam is determined to wed the girl, and her uncle, who, as I have said, is also her guardian, strongly favors the alliance."

"None the less," returned Debonnaire, "it is I and no other who shall win Mademoiselle de Cadillac."

"Hum," said De Rémy, with a shake of his head. "I'd wager a thousand crowns against you."

Debonnaire straightened up slowly, and faced his host. The flare of the candles lighted up his features. His nostrils quivered sensitively. In his eyes shone the light of another flame.

"Two thousand, your excellency, might be worth while."

"A wager! a wager!" cried Varennes, excitedly.

"Well and good," said the governor; "two thousand."

Debonnaire bowed. "That's better. I like high stakes."

"But stay!" added the governor, quickly. "There must be one condition."

"Oh, wherefore, m'sieur; conditions are a bore."

"Perhaps, and yet I count it essential. You must go as Louis le Debonnaire. Under your own name you would doubtless find instant favor with the uncle of mademoiselle. Besides, your wealth might influence the lady herself. Yes, yes; you must be a mere nonentity—Louis le Debonnaire."

The mere nonentity smiled acquiescence.

"Your excellency is not unreasonable. In truth, it is the only condition on which I would seek to win a woman. Riches, fame and family must be held in reserve. One needs them so often, you

know, for a second siege—after marriage."

At this no doubt the bet would have been immediately closed, but for the intervention of Col. de Salières, who sat frowning it down with gloomy foreboding.

"Gentlemen," he interrupted, "I pray you reconsider. For a trifling bagatelle you jeopard a life—the life of a gallant soldier." He looked affectionately at Debonnaire. "Boy, I love you too well, to see you run your head in a noose, all for a gamble. These *incognitos* are dangerous risks; many have lost their lives at such a venture." He turned to the governor with a look of serious apprehension "In case of foul play, it would go ill with my captain, would it not?"

De Rémy, rebuked by the colonel's telling glance, could not but admit the peril.

"True, the Dutch are very suspicious of nonentities who flutter southward from Quebec." His face brightened. "But wait. Can we not arrange it?" He summoned a servant and bade him bring writing materials.

"Nay, but your excellency," objected Debonnaire, "credentials would break the agreement. You forget—"

"Wait and see," replied the governor, and as he wrote he read aloud the passport with satisfaction.

To his excellency, the Governor of New Amsterdam, or, in case of his absence, the Attorney-General, by these presents be it known: The bearer, traveling under the cognomen, Louis le Debonnaire, is the Chevalier Louis de Cadillac, captain in the regiment of Carignan-Salières now stationed at Quebec. Monsieur le Capitaine de Cadillac is worthy of due recognition and all regard.

Having signed this document, his excellency sealed it with much importance.

"You see, messieurs, I seal it with the fleur-de-lys and crown. If Louis le Debonnaire wins Mademoiselle Renée, of the illustrious family of Cadillac, and if, as he says, he presents her here to me in time for our Christmas dinner, the seal being still unbroken, he is to receive from me the sum of two thousand

crowns. If he fails the stake is mine. The conditions are plain, gentlemen?"

"As day," said the colonel, much relieved.

De Rémy smiled at Cadillac.

"You are satisfied, m'sieur?"

"Delighted, excellency." Debonnaire drew a notebook from his pocket, and failing to observe his man, Pierre, who having returned now hesitated, wondering on the threshold, proceeded to enter the bet languidly. "Wager with his excellency, Governor of Canada. I am to win Renée de Cadillac, of New Amsterdam, and present her to his excellency before Christmas. Sealed credentials not to be used except in last emergency. If seal is broken I pay two thousand crowns." He closed the betting book. "Alack, messieurs, I am so exceedingly forgetful. Now where's that rascal, Pierre?"

"Here, at your service, m'sieur," said the voice of the wiry little vagabond, who had been all eyes and ears in the doorway.

"Well, fellow; what said the captain?"

"He said that he would not dream of troubling M'sieur le Capitaine de Cadillac with so trifling a payment."

"And we sail when?"

"Within the hour, m'sieur."

Debonnaire crossed lightly to the window.

"Yes, my brothers. The sails are up. They flap, praise Heaven, in a rising wind—the wind of my destiny, messieurs. And a star ascends to the southward—the star of my destiny, messieurs. Even the moon can't pale it." He hummed a catch of his favorite ditty, gazing the while through the window as if his thoughts were already in the south.

Lover of love, the night is fair,  
Into its heart goes Debonnaire.

While he lingered, yielding himself to the charm of the moment's dalliance, the governor, who had been writing, rose and broke the spell.

"I pray you, m'sieur, give this letter to the captain of the *Ste. Marie*. It

conveys briefly my profound thanks to his majesty, the king, for the snuff-box."

Debonnaire pocketed the letter, with a knowing sidelong glance at his brother officers.

"Gentlemen," said Debonnaire, who was now being cloaked by Pierre; "I leave you. At what hour does your excellency dine," he asked, with a smile at the corner clock, "on Christmas evening?"

"At eight to the minute, m'sieur."

"Good! At eight, gentlemen, I shall be here."

Pierre flung open the doors. A crowd of the château's retinue stood jostling in the passage. Something was afoot, and they knew it. Pierre shoved them aside to make way for his master.

Meanwhile, in the doorway there stood the master, with his back to the crowd and his face to the officers of his regiment, airily making his farewells.

"At eight, gentlemen, I shall be here"—he held out a hand as though dancing a minuet, and, half turning, bowed low as if to an imaginary partner—"with Mademoiselle Renée de Cadillac beside me."

### CHAPTER III.

The shadows were settling down upon the snow. They crept across the ice floes in the western river. As if let loose from the heart of the woods on the distant shores, they pressed forward irresistibly toward Manhattan. So began the siege of evening.

The outlying country was bleak and dark. Homeward by the main entrance of the town came the last remaining stragglers, eager for their generous Dutch hearthsides—some with sledge loads of wood for the blaze, some with game fresh killed for the spit, and others with implements of road making. Here, too, came laborers from distant boweries, bent at the end of the day on an hour in the taprooms, their hire burning in their pockets.

For one and another as they passed him, the gatekeeper, a stolid giant, had a surly greeting. To-night he was

not in a pleasant mood; the December air had purpled his nose, while his ears, though he almost boxed them for the pain, were icicles.

Thus it was that talk of good cheer, of warmth and wine and diversion, only made him the more wrathful. A little old man had paused at the gate with a sledgeful of firewood.

"Ach!" said this wizened burgher, "my toes are frozen." His voice crackled like twigs that are stepped on in winter.

"I'm so numb," he continued, hopping up and down to warm himself, "that I haven't any legs and I haven't any arms. There might as well be none of me. And all to keep others in the lap of comfort. Lord! but the chimneys will roar to-night in the house of the French Secretary. Ach, but this numbness is in my soul!"

With which he would have passed into the town, but for Roelof, the sentry, who stayed him with a heavy hand.

"Numbness, eh? Oh, numb, indeed! Well, you're not dumb, devil take you—talking to a frozen guard about fires and food that he can't enjoy. Would that your tongue was frostbit as well as your arms and legs. Ha, that wily French Secretary! May the house burn down about his ears. The fox! What's afoot there this evening?"

The old man laughed a brittle laugh that suggested a frost-bitten larynx.

"What's afoot? Why, they'll all be afoot. There's to be a great ball—the finest quality of Manhattan—and the supper!" At mention of the supper his thin voice thawed. He cocked a sly eye at the giant. "Well, I'll be there like a household rat nibbling in a corner of the kitchen." So saying he passed through the gateway with his load of logs, chuckling to himself at the sentry's discomfiture.

Roelof, with impotent greed, stood frowning after his tormentor. But not for long. Suddenly, without a sound of warning, he felt his arms pinioned behind him, while a strangely guttural voice growled an inarticulate command. Quaking with terror, the giant stood speechless, not daring to turn. But in

another instant his arms were released, and a girlish laugh mocked him.

"Gretchen Van Borsum!" he exclaimed. "Little hussy!"

The vixen smiled demurely, and the assumed vacuity of her look was as harmless as the smile of a Dutch doll.

"Did you think me an Indian from the forest, good Roelof? Oh, my poor sentinel, what a cruel jest, so wantonly to test your courage!" Picking up a bundle that she had dropped, she now waddled through the gate, for all the world like a fluffy little duckling from the yellow of her head to the awkward paddle of her feet.

"Stay," muttered the sentry. "Indeed, I have had good cause for fear. Only last week poor Franz got his head broken by the blow of a redman's club."

"Did he?" said Gretchen, wide-eyed. "Now, now. How little we hear in the tavern of New Haarlem. Poor Franz! He should have sent for me to cure him. It's not so bad, they tell me, to have one's head broken if it may be cured by little Gretchen Van Borsum, the tavern keeper's daughter."

"*Pouf!*" sneered Roelof, "I'd take no chances."

"Oh, that was evident." With a laugh she waved the bundle before his eyes. "Yet in this kerchief I've got the most wondrous herbs, fresh gathered. But these, *myneher*, are not for broken heads." She held them to her nose, and inhaled with a knowing air their faint fragrance. "The smell is faint in winter; the sap is frozen. But some of them keep green, and even now they can work their magic if boiled and mingled. These are the best of cure-alls." She laughed softly. "Broken heads? No, no; it is broken hearts they heal. Just a drop of the juice on my lady's cheek and presto! she is beautiful. What a color! What youth! Ah, many will buy my cosmetics to-night for the ball of the French Secretary. 'Tis given, you know, in honor of the secretary's niece, Mademoiselle Renée de Cadillac. My father's to lead the musicians. Has he come yet to the town, do you know?"

Roelof scowled sourly.

"Not by this gateway. French ball!

Bah! I like not these French with all their frippery and fine fandangoes."

Gretchen feigned despondency.

"Poor French! 'Tis hard they have the disapproval of so great a personage as Roelof. And for the same reason I can but pity—the Indians."

"Vixen!" The giant reached to grasp her, but she eluded his great paw, and hurried into the town.

The last of the stragglers to return while Roelof stood guard at the open gate was a youth of well-knit, rugged build, tugging after him a sledge with a wine cask.

"Well, Steenwyck," said the sentry, "can you not find wine enough inside the town without bringing more to addele them?"

"No, not of this kind," replied the hardy fellow, straining at his load; "not of this rare old vintage." He straightened up to rest from his exertion. "'Tis a Rhenish I bring from the director's own cellar, with his compliments to the French Secretary. Ah, the French ball will be a grand affair with so fine a wine and all the ladies."

Roelof clinched a fist and glowered at vacancy.

"French fiddlesticks! A plague on it! I've heard nothing but ball, ball, ball in the last half hour, and here stand I all the colder for thinking of their revelry."

The youthful burgher laughed jovially, and swished the snow with his sledge rope.

"French fiddlesticks, indeed. Have you seen ma'm'selle lately? I have just enjoyed that privilege." He squared his shoulders and raised his eyebrows vain-gloriously. "I myself have seen her at the director's." He pointed back over his shoulder. "Ah, good Roelof, what grace, what beauty! Our Holland maids are as wood beside her—though I say it who am Dutch to the bone myself." He shouldered the rope again, and bending forward, strained through the gate. "Think of her, Master Sentinel. It will give a glow of warmth to your frozen veins."

The short twilight had faded from the west, and the sentinel, yawning, cast

a look at the forest and withdrew. Closing the gates he locked them from within the town.

Night had settled on the snow. High above the northern wood the stars shone cold and clear. To the west the river, flowing where it could between the ruckles of ice, seemed like the edge of the world. An hour passed, then the moon rose and silvered the ice floes with a magic radiance and etched the forest against the sky in delicate frosting. Higher yet it rose, nearly full in the distant east, and turned the gloom to a dream-enchantment.

And with it out of the wood rose something else—a sound in harmony with the silver.

Lover of life—the world is fair—  
Out of the night comes Debonnaire.

In another moment the wooer-errant, accompanied by Pierre, the faithful, had entered the open clearing before the gateway. A sorry couple they were in appearance, but buoyant enough in mood. Both bore the marks of travel, but none of fatigue. Pierre stepped with jaunty impudence, his master with an air of sprightly ease. Side by side in the stretch of moonlight, they stood, surveying the palisade of upright logs no bigger than saplings.

"By the mass!" said Debonnaire, "is this the wall of Manhattan?"

Pierre's lip curled scornfully.

"Permit me to flip it away with my finger, m'sieur." Pierre puffed out his cheeks, and blew at the palisade, then stepped back with a pretense of astonishment. "How strange that does not topple it over, m'sieur."

"The question is," said Debonnaire, "how to enter the town without spoiling those pretty fortifications."

Pierre stepped forward, and knocked upon the gate, but there came no answer.

"The devil!" exclaimed Louis. "Now certainly we must scatter these jackstraws."

Pierre looked sorrowful.

"I fear," said he, showing the end of a rope concealed under his cloak, "there'll be no use for this, and the trick

would have been such nice diversion." He touched the skirt of his cloak. "And there'll be no need of this either save to keep the cold from my aching legs. 'Tis indeed a pity."

"Hush," said Debonnaire, with an eye on the woods. "Who's this approaching?"

Pierre drew the cloak close about him and inspected the newcomer. "Good Lord!" he whispered, "behold a pump-kin!"

"May I ask," inquired Debonnaire, politely, "whither away, good sir?"

The stranger, a man of enormous girth and rubicund visage, surveyed them blankly. Full in the moonlight he stood at the edge of the wood, now and then breaking his stare with a sidelong glance at the gate, as though measuring the distance between this startling pair of vagabonds and refuge. Meanwhile, from a flurry of clouds overhead the snow began to fall in large flakes, slowly.

"My question is," repeated Debonnaire, less graciously, "where the deuce are you going?"

At last the Dutchman found his voice.

"Have a care, insolent stranger. Egbert Van Borsum is not to be lightly treated." With which, assuming a pompous manner, he made bold to start forward, but halted again and fell to quaking. The two, intercepting him, stood full in his way with threatening looks. Instantly the spurious pomp deserted him. There was nothing for it but to try cajolery. He pointed to Debonnaire's ribbon-slung lute with a fat forefinger. "Do I see before me a kindred spirit? To-night, good gentlemen, I lead the musicians at the assembly of the Cadillacs—a grand affair. Where should I be going, therefore, save into the town?"

Debonnaire laughed lightly. "Then, m'sieur, you will have to bound over the gate as would a ball, for devil a sentry is here to open it. Hold! Stand still!"

In a second the point of his rapier flashed close to Van Borsum's middle. The Hollander shook with fear. The steel, bright in the moonlight, held his

gaze downward to the vicinity of his threatened paunch with horrible fascination. Beside himself with terror, he forgot the warning and sidled close against the wall.

"Here! here!" whispered his tormentor. "Not another step, or the ball will bound no more. Swip! Like that—a little prick—and it collapses."

"Poor ball," said Pierre, in a mocking tone.

Van Borsum uttered a low moan and instinctively doubled forward. Quick as a wink, Pierre, catching the drift of the ruse, leaped easily to the massive back, and standing on tiptoe, looked over the inhospitable wall.

"By all the saints! The guard is stretched on a settle flat as a pancake. He sleeps like a righteous dead man. *Sacré nom!* Asleep when he should be admitting us! Ha, there goes a snowflake into his open mouth. Now I wonder what he dreams it is—froth of ale, doubtless. Oh, he shall have a deeper draught of the heaven-sent beverage." Pierre scraped a handful of snow from the top of the wall, and, aiming it at the sentry's drooping jaw, sprang to the ground.

Casting upward a pleading glance at Debonnaire, Van Borsum stood with hanging jaw, scarcely daring even yet to stand erect.

"Stay," said Debonnaire, drawing out a gold piece and flipping it into the open mouth; "here's a pill that cures that dread disease, curiosity. Pray let it dissolve upon the tongue, and do not open your mouth again until 'tis melted." He tapped his rapier. "Else I may find it necessary to play the leech and bleed you."

Before the first victim of these airy pleasantries could find courage or words to object, the second, who had been so rudely aroused from slumber, began to choke with the snow in his throat and loudly to splutter remonstrance.

"Who dares to do this?" he growled behind the gate. "Ho there, outside! Do you hear? Who is this rascal?"

Debonnaire looked deeply offended.

"Now here's a hospitable greeting to a stranger without the gate." He fin-

gered his lute. "I must lull the rude passions of this barbarian."

Lover of strife and devil-may-care,  
Out of the night comes Debonnaire.

The gate was opened to a crack by a cautious hand.

"Outlandish jackanapes, whence come you?"

Before the answer could be given, Van Borsum, with a last instinct of self-preservation, flung himself heavily against the gate, and, succeeding in forcing an entrance, was soon lost in the street shadows.

"Who are you—and whence?" repeated Roelof, pulling the gate to a crack again. "I open not to madmen."

"Mad? How so? Now, now, poor knave, give entrance. You may thank the stars above us we played not at bowls with the saplings of your palisade. Is this the boasted wall of Manhattan? *Pardieu!* What a marvelous protection!"

Roelof peered through the crack.

"It is well enough in the present instance. You are no Dutch, I'll warrant. Your tongue betrays you."

Debonnaire looked genuinely pained.

"Pierre, do you hear that? I considered my Hollandish accent perfect. I thought I had learned the tongue in the Low Countries. Let me see. Is there not a little song in your tongue—a song of—but no, I can't remember. It was sung by a maiden who nursed me back to this game of living. I liked the speech of her eyes well, but the speech of her tongue—*pardieu*, you Dutch speak a cumbrous language. Now we of the French——"

"French!" cried Roelof. "French! I've heard enough of you French this evening." Then inquisitively, "Huguenot or Catholic?"

"Neither."

"What then?"

"Both."

"Lunatic! Whence do you come, poor bird of Paradise."

Debonnaire smiled.

"Another soubriquet! Well, since you have it so—from Paradise. We

flapped hither on the north wind, over the tops of the trees—meandering angels. See!" He held out the skirt of Pierre's long cloak which he carelessly drew from the shivering servant. "See how the branches sought to stay us as we flew. 'Tis torn to a fringe, poor cloak."

"Fop!" roared Roelof, starting to close the gate. "Addled fop from some wreck of a ship of France, I'll warrant. I'm told they transport such useless baggage to Canada."

"One moment!" said Debonnaire, "one moment."

"Your name, then? Once for all, your name?"

"But did you not hear the bird's melodious lyric?" He trilled the first line of his famous song. "I am Louis le Debonnaire—*Voilà!* I have told you."

"Peace, vagabond," cried Roelof, "now in good earnest, if you would enter, what seek you here?"

Debonnaire threw his head back. "In a word, I seek Mademoiselle de Cadillac."

A burst of laughter greeted this bold announcement.

"You? Ho, ho! Ma'm'selle de Cadillac! Well, then, you may as well stay where you are. There's to be a ball to-night at the house of the French Secretary."

"Ah," said Debonnaire with a faint smile, "so much the better!"

Roelof, pushing the gate ajar, advanced with the confident scorn of one who has command of a situation.

"And since ma'm'selle is to lead the dance with no less a person than her suitor, the attorney-general, she will have no eyes for demented troubadours."

Debonnaire's voice sounded archly condescending.

"Oh, be not so sure, poor giant. You see, Louis le Debonnaire intends to lead with mademoiselle himself."

Roelof, mightily amused, advanced farther, and cast a closer look at the Frenchman.

"Ho! Now that is excellent. You! This with gigantic scorn. "Fool!" he

cried with sudden rage and he made a rush at Debonnaire. "Take that for your insolence."

Quick as a flash, before he could start back or gain his hold, Pierre's cloak was over his head and fell about him. Under his chin it was drawn tight almost to the gagging point, while a noose dropped around his neck and held him. His arms, beating the air like the blades of a Dutch windmill, were quickly pinioned and bound to his sides with the same rope that choked him when he struggled to free himself. Thus caught like a blindfold bull, he stood there unable to speak for fear of the garrote, unable to move, so tight were his shackles.

"After all," said Pierre, standing back to inspect their handiwork, "we've had a chance to use them." His teeth chattered. "But I begrudge him so warm a covering!"

"Well," said Debonnaire, "you shall find a hearthsides presently. Lead the ox away and tether him to some tree, deep in the woods, off the beaten track, where he may lay him down and sleep beyond the reach of snowballs." He laughed at the sight as Pierre danced off rope in hand and the great cumbrous bear-like thing heavily stumbled after. "Hurry back to me," called Debonnaire, "I await you. The ball, I fear, will soon be in progress."

Seating himself on a fallen tree near the edge of the moonlit stretch he drew out from his breast the cause of all this diversion, and as the spell of its haunting beauty fell upon him, he lost himself in gazing, alone with that face, in the heart of the silver evening. But it was no longer of the ivory face he was thinking, of the gold-framed face inanimate and hung, like his lute, on ribbons.

Already he could almost feel her eyes look into his—those eyes that never yet had done so. He seemed to see the spirit awake within their depths, and the flush mount her petal cheeks where before it had been but the memory of maiden color. The lips would part in speech that had so long refused to answer.

The queenly head would bend to him

—the bosom white, yet always still, would rise and fall with life, her heart would beat with love—her arms would be stretched out to him—

Suddenly he started and glanced at the woods, listening. From their sombre depths came a sound, crisply clear—a sound like that of innumerable tiny bells, all vibrant. It was as though the countless crystal icicles on the branches had been suddenly set ringing. Then above the music rang a cry, a woman's cry for help. Suddenly a sleigh, driven furiously from the woods, dashed into the opening. On the bits of the horses hung two rough-looking fellows, masked, swearing, and bending their heads when the driver's lash made a vicious crack for their faces. Beside the sleigh ran a third, also masked, who struggled to grasp its shrinking occupant.

"Hold, there!" The cry was Debonnaire's. In a trice the pair at the horses' heads fell away in astonishment. A weapon, shimmering in the moonlight, was darting flashes of terror into their eyes. They slunk back. The rapier had felled their comrade with a wound in his outstretched arm.

As the driver drew in his horses, a woman, thickly veiled against the rigor of the winter's night, sprang up in the sleigh where an instant before she had sat cowering.

"Bravo, m'sieur, bravo!" she cried. "Merciful heaven, what is it? And I so late already!"

Debonnaire glanced swiftly at her veiled face, then turned on the two villains, unharmed, close behind him.

"Take him away," he commanded, pointing to their fallen comrade; "take him away, and nurse him—or the devil will nurse you in hell. A pretty piece of work!"

Hastily the rascals, cowed by his air, raised their companion and took to cover.

"The sentry is gone," said the driver, coming back from the gateway, "and one of the shafts is broken."

The lady of the sleigh alighted.

"Can you not bind it so it will serve till I reach home?"

The driver inspected the break more closely.

"Yes, ma'm'selle, perhaps the rope of the halter will—"

But as his mistress was no longer concerning herself with the accident he fell to work without more ado.

The lady of the sleigh was looking through her veil at Debonnaire. For a moment she said nothing.

"Mademoiselle, you are not hurt?" he ventured.

Then she spoke to him.

"Oh, m'sieur," she said in French, "how can I hope to thank you?"

"The gratitude is mine, mademoiselle. I count this the happiest of introductions. So you, also, are French—how kind a stroke of fortune! It may be in your power to help me. I am desirous of meeting a certain lady of your town—Mademoiselle Renée de Cadillac."

The lady of the veil started.

"Renée de Cadillac!" she whispered in amazement.

"Ah," said he, following the unknown, whose feet led her instinctively toward the shadows at the edge of the moonlight; "do you know her? Then will you not arrange it for me?"

"But, m'sieur," she objected, half turning, "I do not even know your name."

Her rescuer bowed low.

"I am Louis le Debonnaire."

They stood near the fallen tree where he had been sitting. For a moment the flurry of snow had passed. From the gate across the opening, the driver, at work on the shaft, eyed his mistress and the stranger, wishing he could hear their words.

"Louis le Debonnaire," repeated mademoiselle, wonderingly. "It seems as if I'd heard that name."

"No doubt you have," said Louis with perfect nonchalance. "On a time the first of the Louis bore it—centuries ago. But tell me, have you ever seen this Mademoiselle de Cadillac?"

She hesitated. "Have you?"

"Yes," replied Debonnaire, mounting his whim, "yes, a thousand times."

"A thousand——"

"And have even kissed her lips, ma'm'selle."

At this he felt her shrink away from him.

"M'sieur, you are surely mad. You presume—"

Debonnaire, with a sigh, unfastened the miniature, and held it out to her.

"And yet those lips were never mine."

Timidly his companion took the picture. Half drawing her veil, yet shielding her profile from him, she glanced at the face and again started.

"How came you by this?"

Debonnaire's fancy took a wilder flight.

"At my birth I think she must have dropped it from the star she lives in. Mademoiselle, that star has ruled my destiny. It shines even now upon us. Look." He pointed to where Venus hung low in the heavens, pale but constant under the moon. "The star of love! It brings me to you. It waits until you tell me that even now, this very night, you will take me to her—to Renée de Cadillac."

The veiled face looked up at the sky a moment, and then forgetting how belated she was, mademoiselle sank to the fallen tree and with drooping gaze seemed to lose herself in meditation.

"This miniature," she said at last, "must indeed be very old."

Debonnaire inclined his head.

"But mademoiselle of to-day is young and even more ravishing, I'm told, than her counterpart." He took the miniature and replaced it in his breast.

The lady of the moonlight glanced up at him sideways from behind her veil.

"Mademoiselle might censure me."

"Ah," cried Debonnaire, with sudden ardor, "now you've told me what I hoped to hear. You know her—you know her?"

The veil nodded doubtfully.

"At times I do."

"At times?"

"And at other times I know her not."

"Mademoiselle, you speak in riddles."

"Nay, but of a riddle. She's difficult to understand."

"That's well. A maid who is not a

puzzle is only half a woman. And does her beauty equal this?" He touched his breast where lay the miniature.

Once again the veil drooped.

"In truth, I think, 'tis not entirely outrivaled by the picture."

"I knew it—I knew it," cried Debonnaire. "Have I not seen her in my dreams? Have I not seen her in the moonlight?"

"In the moonlight?"

"Yes, in a silver dream. Oh, mademoiselle, I must go to this ball to-night—nothing can stay me."

Mademoiselle rose slowly.

"The ball? Oh, *Dieu!* I had forgotten it. How late I am! Farewell, m'sieur, I am due there now—I cannot tarry with your silver dreams. Farewell and thank you. I must indeed make haste." In spite of her words she lingered. "The snow has begun to fall, m'sieur. Look! Your star is hidden behind a cloud."

"But mademoiselle, I implore—"

"Nay, do not, I pray you—I cannot."

"But wherefore?"

"Wherefore? Oh, because—must I tell you? Mademoiselle Renée de Cadillac leads the dance with Mynheer Sybout Van Brugh, the attorney-general. Your ardor—your fire—yes, the very flames in your eyes—might kindle his heavy wrath—and then—*mon Dieu!* what a conflagration. He is a dangerous rival. And yet—" She paused meltingly.

"And yet—" pressed Debonnaire with compelling gentleness.

She shook her head in trouble.

"No, I cannot. He would do you harm if he thought—if Renée showed — Oh, m'sieur, good-night. I must go. My sleigh, I see, is waiting."

As she returned to the sleigh, Debonnaire, walking lightly beside her, held his cloak above her head to shield her from the clinging snowflakes.

"Nay," said he, with tranquil certainty, "it is not the attorney-general who shall lead the dance with mademoiselle. It is Louis de—it is Louis le Debonnaire."

She tossed her head.

"I see you love a jest, m'sieur."

He nodded. "And better yet I love mademoiselle."

"Well, well," she mused, "such madness is not unpleasant to hear after the dull sanity of these Dutch."

Debonnaire helped her into the sleigh. For a moment he stood beside it, detaining with his eyes.

"I shall even marry Mademoiselle de Cadillac."

From the depths of fur in the sleigh came a peal of melodious laughter.

"Better still," she cried, "yet how preposterous!"

The driver, now on his seat, looked down.

"Mademoiselle is ready?"

Before she had answered, Pierre, having returned from the forest, took up a stand behind his master.

"I am ready," said mademoiselle, and the driver raised his whip.

"Pierre!" exclaimed Debonnaire, "the gate!"

Pierre sprang with alacrity full in the gateway.

"Mademoiselle," said Debonnaire, "if your driver persists he will overrun my faithful servant."

The lady of the sleigh emerged slightly from her furs, and bade her driver wait one moment.

"Now what is this, m'sieur? Do you dare?"

"I dare as much as I love. Indeed I cannot let you go until you've granted my request?"

He touched her hand which rested on the sleigh, and falling to one knee kissed it reverently.

"I cannot; I dare not," withdrawing her hand. "If you mean that I must gain your admission to the Cadillacs' ball you ask in vain. I refuse for your own safety."

"Nay, mademoiselle, I do not mean that."

"What then?"

"I mean the introduction to mademoiselle herself—a promise."

"And if I grant this favor, you will not by word or step seek further to detain me?"

For reply, Debonnaire made a sign

to Pierre. "Mademoiselle, the way is clear."

For a moment she hesitated. The second flurry of cloud had passed and the sky was clear.

"Look," she said, "your star is propitious." He turned to follow her gaze. As he did so, she drew aside her veil. "M'sieur—I introduce you," she began in a tremulous tone, then paused as he faced about quickly, "I introduce you, M'sieur le Debonnaire, to——"

He started back in amazement, instinctively catching at the miniature on his breast.

"Renée de Cadillac!"

There she sat for a moment bathed in the stream of moonlight.

Then, at a signal from her, suddenly in the heart of the silence, crack went the driver's whip, the horses sprang through the gateway—and the silver dream had gone.

Back from the town came the music of the sleigh bells, dying into distance.

"Pierre, good rascal," cried Debonnaire, entering the town, "that is the melody we follow. Its destination is also ours."

#### CHAPTER IV.

At the ball of the Cadillacs a minuet was just concluded.

The guests by twos and threes were retiring to the supper room to refresh themselves. Hungrily the musicians watched their departure. Seated in a corner of the ballroom behind an improvised screen of small uprooted evergreens, Egbert Van Borsum and his orchestra cast anxious eyes at a narrower doorway which led to the servants' hall and kitchen. Another moment and their longing would have led them thither bent on forage, had not their employer, the French Secretary, just then re-entered the ballroom to bid them continue their fiddling while the supper was in progress.

The music under these trying conditions grew so discordant that Monsieur Raoul de Cadillac, already in a testy mood, became yet more irascible Turn-

ing on Van Borsum he peered through the evergreens and snapped sarcastic comments.

"Stop it. Stop it, I say." He put a finger to each ear. "*Nom de Dieu!* What a nightmare!"

Van Borsum lowered his bow, and with chin still bulging on his instrument, looked up in despair at this new tormentor.

"Oh, m'sieur!"

"Stop," said old Cadillac. "Where did you get these players? Is this the Dutch idea of harmony? Bah! your flutist there—that shrill and lanky lout—can pipe no better than a peacock."

"Ah, but, m'sieur!"

"Stop, I say—and what of that prodigious knave with the bass viol? Does he think his bow's a saw to cut a tree down?"

"Nay, now, Monsieur de Cad——"

"Stop, stop, I tell you," cried the irate host. "No excuses. And who's that decrepit old numskull, cloaked as if he were frozen—there—bent double in the corner? Is that a lute he carries? Has he fallen asleep? Why doesn't he play? Eh? Now why doesn't that numskull play? What in the world is he paid for?"

Van Borsum lowered his violin, put finger to lip and stepped mysteriously closer to the evergreens. But at this the decrepit figure in question stirred slightly and the leader forbore to offer an explanation. He only stood staring gravely through the branches.

At this juncture a belated guest entered in evident dudgeon, no less a personage than Sybout Van Brugh, the attorney-general. Even the dignity of his black velvet coat, silver buttons and massive proportions could not disguise his awkward annoyance and vexation.

"Mademoiselle Renée, your niece?" he inquired quickly.

"Is here," replied Cadillac with a bantering smile.

"Here?"

"Yes, in the supper room, sipping her wine, no doubt, as comfortable as can be."

The attorney-general motioned his host aside to a corridor at the rear of

the ballroom. Here the two walked up and down, conversing in low whispers.

"So you failed," said the secretary, cocking an eye of scorn at the large Hollander beside him.

"Yes, but I cannot account for it. My men have fled—vanished utterly."

"Good! some ruse of hers, I'll swear. Ah, clever Renée! Well, well, Myneher Sybout Van Brugh, you must try again, that's all. Believe me, nothing but these high-handed measures will win her to you." He paused and drawing a snuff-box from his pocket took a pinch and offered the box to Sybout.

But the attorney-general, frowning heavily, shook his head.

"I do not delight in sneezing."

"Hum," said Cadillac, pocketing his precious bauble; "who save a Dutchman would sneeze in scenting the delicious granules?"

"You were saying—" prompted Van Brugh.

"Oh, I was saying— Ah, yes—I observed that only a daring deed will win her. Of course, as we arranged, it must all be make-believe. Blessed saints, if you ever really harmed her—I'd—but no, I ask your pardon, *myneher*, for the implication." He laid a small white hand on the other's arm with a touch of propitiation. "Perhaps I am somewhat brusque, *myneher*, but you put me out, I allow, with repeated failures. Here was I thinking this final stroke had told. Here was I saying to myself, 'Well, well, by now they have borne her to his house and he is proving himself her master.' Said I to myself, 'He will, as a host, receive her not ungraciously. But if she rebels he will threaten to marry her by force or kill her in some delicious, lingering way ——'"

Sybout smiled gloomily.

"Yes," he interposed, "had the chance been mine I would have played the farce even to that extreme."

"Said I to myself," continued Cadillac, "thus he will intimidate her into a quick surrender. Or after beguiling her with gentle pleasantries, perhaps he will strive to appear agreeable. 'Let us go to the ball,' he will say, 'as husband

and wife—Mynheer and Vrow Van Brugh.' He will picture to her the delight of a wedding ball, and what a great personage she would be as the bride of the attorney-general. Or again, as a last resort, thought I—" The secretary paused with a wry grimace.

"Well," said Sybout, "what did you think?"

"Oh, as a last resort I thought you might make love to her." His laugh sounded like a distant cackle. "So here I sat waiting for the betrothed couple, when by all the saints! back comes Renée alone, blithe as a lark, and just in time for the dancing. *Pardieu, mynheer*, your brigands were a poor imitation."

Sybout passed a hand across his brow.

"It's all a mystery. The plan was laid to perfection."

Monsieur de Cadillac laughed squeakily.

"Plans are like eggs; they're easily laid, but the thing, good sir, is to hatch them. I've favored this marriage from the start. The game's not lost—we'll try again. I tell you it's the only way. Nothing but a daring deed will win her. Little you know the hot blood of a Cadillac maid. The youthful Cadillac's an eagle. Now there's one I've heard of who heads our family in France. He's called the peacock with an eagle's heart. Ah, *mynheer*, a soldier's sword, a courter's dress, a lover's tongue—that's the combination to win a woman."

Sybout sighed with doleful misgivings.

"Pout, never mind," pursued his animated host, "perhaps you can counterfeit these faculties. You must pounce—that's the word, *mon ami*—you must pounce upon her."

But the attorney-general still looked crestfallen. Despite the mock heroics of his crafty old adviser, he felt hopeless to-night. And yet he knew that Cadillac truly favored the match, for this representative of the Cadillac family was none too rich, none too powerful, whereas he, the attorney-general of New Amsterdam, had achieved both wealth and dignity. Oh, yes, the French

Secretary wished his niece and ward to marry well, and the French Secretary was cunning at intrigue, but still the plan seemed hopeless. It was so bizarre, this feigned brigandage, so startling to the Dutch temperament.

"I fear it will never succeed," said Sybout, "and I don't like it. The plan is a breach of law."

De Cadillac's lips drooped.

"Law! Law? But the attorney-general knows no law."

"No law! Hum! Is anyone in New Amsterdam more skilled than I? Knows no law, indeed!"

"*Mon Dieu!*" ejaculated Cadillac, "how very literal! I mean that you are the interpreter of law, therefore there's no one higher to enforce it. So do your worst. *Compel* her, I say. Be even ugly in your resolve to make her marry you. And yet, of course, be careful. Don't go too far. I've seen you aroused. *Sacré bleu!* you must keep your temper. If you try this plan again and your men so much as harm a hair of Renée's head, I'll have them—"

"Well?"

"Before the attorney-general!"

At this even Sybout laughed aloud.

"Now come," said the French Secretary, "we'll join the rest at supper. Remember you must lead the quadrille with my niece as though nothing had happened. Later we'll learn what passed outside the town this evening. If she suspected you now, *parbleu*, I believe she'd take to the forest and join the savages rather than accept you as a husband." He laughed again with that distant cackle. "On my word, Renée said so this very morning."

With which mischievous assertion the little French Secretary clicked his high heels together, pointed out his toes, bowed to his guest and led the way airily to supper.

"Come, come, *mynheer*, a merry face. The fly must not suspect the spiders."

As they left the ballroom, the flutist, a tall fellow, scarcely stouter than the instrument he so misused, rose stealthily and followed them with hungry eyes. "A monstrous shame I call it to see them all in there eating and guzzling

while we go starving. Bah! I'm off to the kitchen."

"I too," said he who had been sawing the bass viol.

"And I," followed several others in quick mutiny.

Only Van Borsum and the decrepit looking luteist hesitated.

"A plague on it," grumbled the leader, rising painfully. "Every joint stiff and not a drop to oil it. A pest, I say, on their hospitality. To think that I, Egbert Van Borsum, must sup with men mine host has hired—I who have served his equals many a tankard of ale and have drunk their healths as host at my own tavern."

He glanced helplessly at the sole remaining musician who, bent far forward over his lute, sat with eyes closed and head nodding.

"What!" cried Van Borsum, "asleep? Would to Heaven I could slumber likewise." He cast a longing look through the door of the supper room. "Drinking my good wine as well as the director's—mine—and—oh, I'm famished!"

Now himself a rebel at the instigation of the inner man, he went out in heavy haste, not by the supper-room door, but as a cruel world would have it—by the entrance to the kitchen.

When the leader had taken himself off, his dejected-looking subordinate of the lute raised his head, looked furtively about, and at last, as though still half asleep, touched a finger to his lute strings. In a moment the random notes grew louder; they rose to a dreamy tune. The musician appeared to be playing in his sleep. With his cloaked shoulders bowed and bent behind the screen of evergreens he seemed scarcely to be striking actual chords. It was as if in his reverie some fugitive air, by sheer memory, had echoed into music.

As the harmony rose and grew more coherent, it must at last have faintly reached the supper room, for thence to the door came Renée de Cadillac, alone. Pausing a moment on the threshold she cast a grateful glance at the decrepit

figure and stood there listening with a far-off gaze—a striking picture.

Over her forehead her hair swept soft like a drooping raven's wing. From the coiffure coiled low and circled by pearls one curl had artlessly fallen and lay in purpling shadows on her neck. In the depths of her eyes dwelt the tint of twilight distances, but the rest of her face showed a changing light, a light that seemed to escape from some hidden source of radiance and ripple with bewildering fascination in the curves of her mouth and the undulation of her piquant figure. It danced in her eyes; it played about the dimples of her mobile mouth, and even quivered in her delicate nostrils.

Long she stood there, her glance languid and yet sparkling at sight of the deserted ballroom as though in fancy she were peopling it with the sprightly ghosts of her own vivacious memory.

How bored she was in New Amsterdam—especially so this evening! She felt almost stifled by the pompous attentions of these ponderous, portly Hollanders. But now for a fleeting moment, here on the threshold of the empty ballroom, she could breathe freely and imagine herself once more at Versailles, thanks to this indigent old musician. Yes, yes, it was the music of France he played. Perhaps even now his majesty, the king, was dancing to it beyond the ocean. And possibly Louis de Cadillac was there—that gallant cousin whose deeds, she had heard, were sung in the streets of Paris.

With eyes catching fire at the thought and cheeks warming to the color of the music, she lightly entered the ballroom. The music carried her away. She fell to gliding slowly to the time of the tune as if with an imaginary partner. Ah, if she could but thread with that Louis the mazes of the dance—if only she could forget these Dutchmen! Her back was now to the evergreens, her eyes on far distant Versailles.

As she moved away from the music it seemed to follow her, but she did not reason why. Reason had nothing to do with this all too fleeting respite.

At last she paused and, half turning,

courtesied low as to the figure of her dream. When she straightened up, that figure stood before her.

The music had ceased. The decrepit musician had vanished. His cloak lay cast aside behind the evergreens. The wearer, in gay attire, decrepit no longer, was smiling into her eyes. At his side hung a lute, silent.

She breathed hard.

"M'sieur le Debonnaire!"

His eyes sparkled.

"Yes, mademoiselle—your partner."

"You have come here, unbidden," said Renée with arch severity.

"Nay, mademoiselle, I was earnestly invited."

Her brows were raised, her chin uplifted.

"By whom, pray tell me?"

"By a pair of compelling eyes that looked down at me from a sleigh in the moonlight."

"Foh, you take the favor for granted."

"It was granted."

She stirred uneasily.

"You must go at once. I would not have you found here."

"Oh, but I shall not be found."

"You will leave?"

"No."

"No? Ah, I see. You will resume the disguise."

"No, here I stay, and as I am. When a thing is not lost do we speak of it as found? Now I am by no means lost—hence it is plain I shan't be found."

She tossed her head and frowned impatiently.

"A quibble of words."

"Words of the heart, mademoiselle. In truth I cannot leave after so much trouble in the coming. Fortunately I had met Van Borsum earlier this evening, and he had learned a lesson, else I believe he would never have dared to admit me."

Renée bit her lip and shot a glance at either door.

"Then he knows——"

"Yes, mademoiselle; yes, of course—and so will they all in a very few minutes. How soon do we lead the quadrille together?"

"No, no," whispered Renée, less loftily now and more dismayed. "M'sieur, I cannot—I refuse—for your own safety."

Debonnaire made a light gesture of depreciation.

"Mademoiselle, you have already danced with Louis le Debonnaire as your partner. That was a good beginning. We soon shall dance again before them all."

"No, no, no. Consider the consequences."

He smiled calmly.

"I do. That's why I ask you."

"How so?"

"Mademoiselle, I plead not for myself. I plead for him—Myneer Sybout Van Brugh, the attorney-general."

"*Mon Dieu!*" exclaimed Renée, "a curious way of pleading."

"No, not when you understand. I tell you that if we do not lead the quadrille together the Hollander will suffer. This rapiere of mine is a most impetuous toy. I call it '*l'enfant terrible*.' Mademoiselle, I fear 'twould prove a willful weapon at seeing anyone your partner save myself. 'Tis indeed devoted to its master. So you see, I plead not for Louis le Debonnaire, but for Myneer Sybout Van Brugh."

"You speak my name!" The voice sounded harshly ominous. The person so fantastically made bold to plead for, having just entered from the supper room, now stepped heavily forward with a brusqueness that seemed to deny any need of the Frenchman's affected consideration. "You speak my name!"

Debonnaire bowed, smiling.

"Indeed? Then you are the attorney-general. I thank you for the introduction."

Sybout was glowering at Renée.

"This guest, I fancy, was unexpected. His name?"

"*Dieu*, what now?" she demanded, with snapping eyes. "By what right do you presume to play the inquisitor? Myneer Van Brugh, you forget—this is the house of the Cadillacs."

"Yes, but this town," proclaimed Sybout, "is under the jurisdiction of the attorney-general. Strangers—especial-

ly foreign strangers—must give good account of themselves and that to me."

Debonnaire nodded approval.

"True, most true—officially well spoken. Be it known to you then: I am a certain wanderer named Louis le Debonnaire, who finding mademoiselle in—"

"No, no," whispered Renée, "have a care."

But Louis would not be silenced. "— who finding mademoiselle in danger objected to her peril as a matter of course. Truth is, three scoundrels had set upon her sleigh. Naturally I bribed them to desist and saved her."

"What!" exclaimed Van Brugh, "you bribed them!"

Debonnaire touched his rapier.

"With coin of a metal that's minted in Toledo. 'Tis the only kind I do not miss or mourn for in the payment of a debt."

Sybout found it hard to contain himself.

"Sir! You did that?"

Debonnaire eyed him coolly.

"I did—and will do more."

Then for a moment came a pause while Sybou Van Brugh groped through his dense mind for a hold on this daring stranger.

"I must have your credentials," he declared at last.

Debonnaire raised his eyebrows in surprise.

"Credentials, *mynheer*? Nay, I expected some token of confidence from you." He looked wounded. "Did I not, so to speak, become your agent in punishing offenders against that law which the attorney-general so worthily upholds?"

Van Brugh bit his lip. He was fairly worsted. Who was this smooth-spoken courtier whose rapier first had foiled a precious plot and whose tongue now capped that proceeding by despoiling the plotter of a just revenge. Van Brugh fell back upon the dignity of silver buttons, buckles, black velvet and massive bulk.

"Mademoiselle," said he, offering Renée his arm, "we miss you at the supper."

Now once more there was a pause—a poignant moment without a word or movement. Renée was torn two ways. To stay was dangerous; to go was reluctantly to deny herself a new and piquant experience. And yet to go was the only way that the dictates of wisdom permitted. She rested a hand on Sybou's arm and went with him. But her heart was at odds with her head. It fluttered in wild rebellion. It rose to her eyes and lighted their depths as she looked back lingeringly at her now despairing fellow-countryman.

When at last she had vanished within the supper room, Debonnaire took a step or two after them. He could see the end of a supper table. He could see several of the guests with upraised glasses making bold to toast the pair that had just entered. What insolence! Could it mean—? Debonnaire swore beneath his breath. The glasses clinked around the table.

He hastened to the door. Somebody in ponderous Dutch was pledging Mynheer Van Brugh and Mademoiselle Renée de Cadillac. Debonnaire started impetuously forward. In an instant he had entered the supper room.

## CHAPTER V.

The musicians came straggling back from the servants' quarters. In the grasp of one was a bottle, in another's a loaf of bread, in another's the bone of a cutlet. Van Borsum, still doleful, had managed to abstract from the kitchen a bottle of wine and a small quail.

While the rest, seating themselves, took up their instruments and began to tune them for the quadrille, the tavern-keeper voiced their discontent.

"Hum," said he, missing the lute player, "the unknown's gone, I suppose, on the same vain quest." He crossed to the line of pillars at the back of the ballroom and glanced down the corridor, then mournfully at the bird in hand. This so occupied his scorn that he failed to notice the entrance in the passage of Pierre le Coq, who, warily

eying Van Borsum and the others, stole along and hid himself behind the pillar near which he stood. "Huh!" snorted Van Borsum, scowling at the inadequate quail, "only this for me. These French are indeed a finicky people. One paltry quail." Pierre, peering round the column, surveyed the morsel with hungry eyes.

"A plague on them," pursued Van Borsum, holding the bottle aloft like a bâton before his thirsty fellows; "but at least here's wine to cheer the inner man."

The lanky flutist cried "Have a care!" and he of the great bass viol murmured a warning. But, alas! too late. Out shot the hand of Pierre, quick as a monkey's paw, and snatched the bottle from its rightful owner. Then the robber disappeared behind the pillar.

Van Borsum in a rage turned, but could see no one.

"Ach," wailed he, "my wine! What—where—how—"

Pierre calmly emerged from his hiding place and posing impudently under the central arch, raised the bottle after Van Borsum's manner.

"At least I've wine," said he, "to cheer the inner man. Your excellent health, my good sir." He drank deep.

"Rascal!" cried Van Borsum, "I'll—"

"Nay, nay," said Pierre, licking his lips, "beware, dear benefactor. Remember the golden pill. Remember the leech." He glanced at the bottle; then added, as with a sudden compunction: "But on second thought, I'll restore it to you."

Van Borsum caught at the bottle and raised it to his lips. But not a drop remained. The draught of Pierre had been complete.

"Thief!" growled the tavern-keeper, now beside himself with rage. "Scoundrel!"

Pierre frowned.

"Nay, no hard names, m'sieur. Save for me, you would not be here to enjoy that tempting bird. Was it not I who mounted the throne of your prodigious back, like him in the play called *Tamerlane* who mounts on Bajazet—was it not

I who gained you an entrance to this town?"

Approaching the flutist, Pierre, with a sudden dart of his hand, appropriated the sole remaining bottle.

"Nay, nay, offer no remonstrance. Pipe on, good sir—and make your bird-like music. I, too, now have a flute that charms the senses. Behold it." He raised the bottle to his lips and tapped his fingers thereon, as if it were a flute, while drinking.

"The vagabond!" muttered Van Borsum. "But wait—after the dance. Now to the tunes, good fellows."

Again the squeak of tuning. From the bass viol a long groan, from the flute a shriek, from the violin of the leader a tremulous asthmatic plaint, weirdly dolorous. Pierre looked through the evergreens and pretended to beat time to these preliminary discords with the second empty bottle.

"What delightful music," he observed a little thickly. "I had not looked for so pleasant an entertainment. By St. Bartholomew, 'tis a wonderful wedding feast!"

The bass violinist laughed scoffingly. "Wedding feast, indeed!"

"Insane blackleg!" exclaimed Van Borsum. "He's as mad as his master."

"Nay, nay," said Pierre, now more than ever querulous, "nay, my great sir, not by any means insane. Your's is the poll that's empty. It is a wedding feast, said I, and a wedding feast, say I again."

"Ass!" cried Van Borsum, "in the name of Heaven, bray no longer. I cannot think."

"So I said," smiled Pierre, "so I said, m'sieur. You cannot think. Your poll is empty. Good. Then I've a chance to fill it. Hark to this. I'll wager my master weds Mademoiselle de Cadillac. That's why I call it a wedding feast. By way of prophecy, good simpleton, well, I'll wager my master weds Ma'm'selle de Cadillac. Who takes me? Eh?—who—who?"

The loquacious servant was at present so carried away by his sudden mania for a wager, that he failed to note the proximity of Sybout Van Brugh, who

having started across in haste from the supper-room door to the rear corridor, now paused with downdrawn brows and listened to the chatterer.

"What?" cried Pierre, bobbing his head in through the evergreens at one and another of the musicians. "What? No bets?"

"Damnable insolence," muttered the flutist.

"Demented fool," rumbled he of the bass viol.

But Pierre, somewhat unsteady on his pins, was now accosting the leader.

"Have you the golden pill about you? Come, I feel sure 'tis yet undigested in the region of your pocket. Aha," he added, as Van Borsum with a look of cupidity drew forth the coin; "aha, I thought so. Good! Here's another I'll match against it."

Van Borsum's eyes narrowed.

"You mean you'll wager that the Frenchman weds Mademoiselle de Cadillac?"

"That's what I mean," nodded Pierre, and the unseen listener started. "That's exactly what I mean and what I'll wager."

Van Borsum laughed.

"I'll take you," said he. "Oho, another louis d'or."

Pierre blinked at space, and drew from his pocket a betting book.

"My memory is poor, m'sieur. I must enter the wager." He proceeded to do so after the manner of his master. No ape could have played a better piece of mimicry, and the wine in him broadened the burlesque. In this way Debonnaire had entered the wager made on the eve of his departure from Quebec. But by Debonnaire the bet was now forgotten. Life had ceased to be a game. Not so with Pierre le Coq. By him the bet was remembered, and unfortunately his deep potations had set wagging memory's tongue.

"One louis d'or," said the tipsy mimic, making a pretext of writing, though he could not so much as indite his name. "One louis d'or with Mynheer Van Borsum, the tavern-keeper, that M'sieur Louis le Debonnaire weds Ma'm'selle de Cadillac within a week."

While Sybout, now beside himself with anger and mystification, knitted his brows and gnawed his mustache, Van Borsum winked at his colleague of the bass viol.

"Poor fool, he apes a fop."

"Nay, sir," quoth Pierre with befuddled condescension, "I but practice my master's graces. 'Twas thus my master did it." Pierre flourished the book again. "'I'll win Mademoiselle de Cadillac,' says he; 'two thousand crowns upon it,' and he writes it down so. That's like my master. What's more, he never loses. Sleep on that, M'sieur Tavern-keeper, and au revoir."

He started to retreat by the corridor, but ran head down into the attorney-general.

"Not so fast," said Van Brugh. "Who are you, fellow?"

"Nobody," said Pierre, terror-struck and dazed. "Nobody at all, m'sieur."

Sybout assumed his official scowl.

"Answer me."

"Oh, indeed, nobody, m'sieur. I'm only Pierre——"

"Pierre, the devil——"

"Nay, m'sieur, but Pierre le Coq—a harmless bird——" he was slowly backing towards the passage—"a harmless bird who crows—then flaps his wings—and flies."

Whereat he suited the action to the word and fled, now somewhat sobered, from the ballroom.

Van Brugh turned to the musicians. Van Borsum stepped forward officially.

"Shall I summon the guard, mynheer?"

"No," said Van Brugh, "not yet; keep silence."

He was intercepted by Renée, who appeared from the supper room, and bade Van Borsum prepare for the quadrille.

"One moment, mademoiselle," said Sybout, "there is a matter of grave import." He crossed to the doorway and turning his back on the orchestra, spoke in a low voice. "There is a matter concerning which, as your uncle's friend and your own, mademoiselle, it is my duty to enlighten you. I must inform

you of a most outrageous plot against you."

Renée smiled and raised her eyebrows.

"Do you mean the attack on my sleigh this evening?"

"No," he said, wincing, "worse than that. It seems this strolling Frenchman, this vagabond called Debonnaire, whom you have condescended to receive, has made a bet"—Sybout paused and his voice fell to a whisper—"has made a bet that within a week he will win you—you, Renée de Cadillac—to wife!"

Renée started.

"He! A wager!" Then she laughed incredulously, a laugh as clear and melodious as the bells of her sleigh; "Oh, myneer, what a crack-brained story."

Van Brugh shook his head gravely.

"Indeed it seems incredible, yet have I not just heard it from the mouth of his own servant?"

"Oh," said Renée, her lip curling, "so you discussed the master with the man?"

"Of course not."

"How worthy of a gentleman!"

"You do me wrong," said Van Brugh stolidly. "I overheard—"

"Ugh!" interrupted Renée, with disgust; "worse and worse. You listened while the serving men were talking."

Sybout, stung by her scorn, caught her wrist and bent nearer.

"Mademoiselle, I'll prove it to you. I'll prove it to you beyond the shadow of a doubt. Ask this upstart—this Debonnaire—to show you his betting book. He will not do so. The bet, I tell you, is written there in black and white by his own hand."

But still Renée scoffed at him.

"He! A bet! Oh, m'sieur, you are actually amusing. What! Lay a bet on Renée de Cadillac like any wager on some cocking-main or bear fight. Oh, m'sieur, the very suggestion is an unpardonable affront. The thing is preposterous, grotesque." Again the bell-like laughter, this time accompanied by a chorus of mirth, in the supper room. The guests, jovial with wine and eager

for the quadrille, would soon return. Mademoiselle crossed slowly to the corridor window and looked out between the curtains. Sybout heard Debonnaire's voice approaching and drew near to the screen of evergreens as though he had been talking with the leader of the orchestra. The two Frenchmen, Debonnaire and old Raoul de Cadillac, were leaving the supper table. It was evident that their conversation was highly diverting and amiable.

"And so," the old fox was saying as they entered, "you put the villains to rout? Good, very good! M'sieur le Debonnaire, permit me as mademoiselle's uncle and guardian to thank you."

Debonnaire made light of the affair.

"Oh, 'twas a pleasant diversion." He left Cadillac somewhat abruptly and crossing to the motionless figure at the window, spoke in a low voice. "Forgive me for following you to supper," he murmured, "but when I heard them toasting you together I feared—but no, praise Heaven, the toast was an idle jest."

Meanwhile, Van Brugh had drawn old Cadillac aside.

"Twas he, m'sieur, who foiled us."

"*Mon Dieu!*" laughed the other, "the game grows interesting."

"The man's a scoundrel," declared Sybout in a harsh whisper. "It seems impossible, but this upstart has actually wagered that he will marry ma'm-selle."

Cadillac started.

"Mother of Heaven! He—impossible! You know this?"

"Yes, I have positive proof."

The old man cocked an eye at the burgher. "A rival? A rival? Ho, now here's a pretty affair—and so unexpected! Not a word of warning! Devil take these whirlwind adventurers!" He considered the matter with a shrewd scowl. "We must nip it in the bud," he whispered; "and, thank Fortune, the nipping's easy. A gambler? Excellent! We have him beaten already. Here's a weakness at the start."

"You must force him," said Sybout,

with weighty impatience, "to show his hand."

Cadillac smiled.

"Not so fast—wait for the quadrille."

Sybout's cheeks were hanging heavy with a ponderous sense of the seriousness of the situation. His lethargy was at last broken. But his mind was without resource. He could only gaze at his host, waiting.

"Have you told her?" finally whispered that diplomatist, busy with his snuffbox.

"Yes."

"Good! Now come. Leave them alone. We must prolong the supper." He drew the attorney back towards the supper room after him. "Leave them alone and trust a woman's curiosity."

On the threshold the crafty old intriguer paused, and returned softly to the evergreens.

"Come, Mynheer Van Borsum; come play for us; bring your musicians to the supper room. The quadrille must wait."

Whereupon, nodding and blinking with excitement, he returned to the company at the board, followed by the musicians.

Debonnaire, for a minute silent, stood looking over Renée's shoulders, out into the moonlight. They could see the fort, low, solid, square, now in the silver light as impressive as one of the pyramids of Egypt. Near this a large windmill held its arms aloft and motionless. One of the arms was pointing like a guidepost to the moon. Toward the mill and the fort a narrow street or lane stretched away into the shadows of distant houses.

The town was sunk in silence. They could see the river known as the Hudson, its moving floes packing tight at the edge of the island, and beyond, they could dimly descry the distant opposite shore line—the intangible western line that suggested a world of dreams, and that was in reality the border of a mainland, boundless and little known.

The silence was broken by the orchestra's discords, which issued from the supper room. Renée shot a glance at the evergreens.

"The musicians have gone," she said. "What has happened?"

At once Louis became the Debonnaire again.

"How strange. And we were waiting for the dance. No doubt your uncle has bidden them play to enliven the supper—small wonder. No doubt it needs enlivening. *Mon Dieu*, that Hollander, Van Brugh, wears a heavy jowl, I'll warrant, now that you and I are considering the look of life without him."

They turned from the window, and glanced off in the direction of the supper room.

"'Tis a shame they delay our quadrille," said Debonnaire. "Ah, mademoiselle, together you and I will circle like doves, with the Dutchmen lumbering after us—a flock of poultry."

But Renée shook her head.

"'Tis out of the question, m'sieur. What tells you that my inclination would give you the dance, were it possible?"

"Your eyes," returned Debonnaire.

Renée looked at him a moment in silence, or, rather, allowed him to look at her—to study her face.

"But now," she asked, finally, "now what do they tell you?"

"Oh, mademoiselle, they trouble me—and yet—I would have staked—"

"A thousand crowns or so?" She surveyed him coldly.

Debonnaire started, blanched. He looked like a man stabbed by a sudden thrust. He stood silent. To think that he had betted money on this woman's love—oh, it seemed impossible. But at the time he had not known. She had been so far away, so unreal; a woman to be won, it is true, but not this living, breathing Renée, whose mere presence already played havoc with that element in him which had gained him the soubriquet of Debonnaire. He was disconcerted only for a moment, but in that moment he was numb with a new sense, a horrid consciousness never till now experienced, a consciousness almost of shame. And he a Cadillac, the *petit chevalier*—chevalier of the flower of France.

Quick on the heels of this unpleasant realization rushed an instinct of self-preservation—all in that first instant—and of wonder at how she knew. What devious fate had been at work? As he stood there, now for the first time discomfited, now for the first time, despite his courtier's bearing, a sorry sight, she smiled more and more coldly, and repeated at last, with withering scorn: "A thousand crowns or so?"

Debonnaire flung back his head recklessly. Fate must be met with daring.

"Nay, mademoiselle, on your favor I would have staked—my life."

She laughed aloud with the sleighbell laughter.

"And would, perhaps, have made the entry in your betting book?"

Again he winced, and again quickly recovered himself.

"Even that, for is not my life a bagatelle?"

"Oh, and is love?"

"Nay, no longer. But, oh, mademoiselle, you withhold some thought that should find words. You conceal your meaning."

"And you?"

"Ah, yes; a meaning yet unspoken. Your doubting eyes lay siege to it. The truth lies hidden in my heart."

"So? Nay, now, m'sieur; but in your pocket—"

He made bold to frown.

"Mademoiselle, you trifle. 'Tis written plainly in my face."

She raised her eyebrows mockingly.

"And in that betting book."

"What?" said Debonnaire. "Mademoiselle, I pray you, harry me no longer. You fire me with daring. The barrier that might else have stood between us is burned away. I'll speak; I'll tell you all." He caught her hand. "I seem to hear the music of love's liberty."

Renée withdrew her fingers from his passionate clasp.

"Music forsooth!" Her laughter railed at him without a trace of mercy. "Ah, yes; the clink of coin."

Debonnaire bit his lip.

"Mademoiselle, you must not mock me—you shall not. Do you know that

I am—— Do you not read in my heart a passion——"

She nodded still with irony, and answered, lightly: "A passion for games of chance?"

"Ay," he replied, now piqued into a duel of wit, and bent on matching himself against her. "Ay, if the chance means heaven."

"Ah, I see, m'sieur. And if a woman's to be played for?"

"Even then, mademoiselle, for the stake's the highest—a man's whole heart and soul."

"Or merely," she suggested, "a part of his fortune?"

Debonnaire looked grieved.

"Mademoiselle, you persist in ignoring what lies nearest to my heart."

"Nay, nay," she protested. Then with a new frankness: "There lies the object of my interest. Near that heart there is a pocket, and in the pocket a betting book, and in the betting book——"

Debonnaire appeared to consider a surrender.

"You would see the contents of this pocket?" he asked, tentatively.

"I would, indeed."

"You command?"

She inclined her head. "Yes, inexorably."

As if with reluctance, Debonnaire drew forth the miniature. "Your wish, mademoiselle, is granted."

The evasion told. She was surprised into a look of admiration. He had shown the courtier's mettle. Of such was the comedy at Versailles. She acknowledged the clever foil.

"A stroke of genius, m'sieur. You parry well. But, tell me, does nothing else lie deeper yet in that receptacle?"

Again he paused, and now seemed to be listening to the music that faintly reached them from the supper room.

"Was ever another so compelling?" he mused. "I am disarmed, and plead for mercy. But you will listen." He started as if to draw her to the window again, that there in the shelter it offered he might tell her all.

"You can explain?" she asked, with a new trace of eagerness and anxiety.

"Tell me, can you explain?" She started to follow him. But at this moment the music ceased and a burst of laughter issued from the supper room.

"Not now, mademoiselle. The time's too short. Let me see you alone."

"But if it were true," said Renée, half to herself. "Ah, no, I can't believe it."

"Nor I, mademoiselle. I'd give my soul to undo—" He broke off quickly. Again that jarring laughter from the guests. In a moment they would return for the quadrille. "Mademoiselle, mademoiselle, when can I see you again? I beg of you—when and where? Quick, I beseech you, the place and hour?"

She paused irresolute, then masking her indecision, raised her eyes to his coldly.

"The place, m'sieur, is nowhere; the time, never."

"Nay, nay," he implored her. "Mademoiselle, you cannot be so cruel."

She looked at him, and her eyes melted slowly. She yielded in spite of herself. "Well, m'sieur, there will be a sleighing party to-morrow night—" She paused.

"Yes, yes," he urged.

"We stop for bread and chocolate at New Haarlem."

He caught her hand, and, bending, kissed it.

"The place?"

"Van Borsum's tavern."

"The hour?"

"Six."

"Good. Six, to-morrow night, Van Borsum's tavern. I have a roaming memory, mademoiselle; but now, if ever, it shall not fail me."

Renée's tone had a tremor of eagerness.

"You will explain? Say you will explain, m'sieur."

He flinched. "I will convince you."

The eagerness died from her voice.

"Oh—then doubtless you will play your last card."

"Yes, if you persist in putting it so."

"And the card?"

He smiled. "Myself. Nor is the card a knave."

"And yet," she flashed, "it may not be strong enough."

"Tis strong enough, mademoiselle, to take a queen." And he made a profound obeisance.

She laughed once more with rippling melody.

"Monsieur, your humility's unbounded."

"Nay, mademoiselle, I confess a humble love could never be Debonnaire's. Reverence does not demand humility in loving. There's pride in the worship of a lover—pride and power."

He paused and drew closer to her. Renée's breath came fast.

"And now, mademoiselle, you must, you shall love me. Nay, nay, don't speak. I see in your eyes the flame I've so long looked for in my dreams."

Renée trembled and swayed towards him.

"Ah, mademoiselle, what matters the past? Renée—my own! The dream has come true—at last you are mine." He drew her to him.

"No, no," she cried, resisting, yet mastered by his passion.

"In Heaven's name!" exclaimed a voice in the doorway. "An insult to ma'm'selle! He holds her." Sybout Van Brugh strode toward them, hesitated, swore under his breath, and finally advancing in heavy fury, struck Debonnaire in the face with the back of his hand.

Debonnaire went pale as death, but when he spoke his voice was lightly calm.

"Oh, very well," said he; "outside and now."

Sybout assented with sullen rage.

"One moment," said Louis, unhang-ing the lute from his shoulders; "one moment. I must protect this instrument. You might break it, mynheer. Then how could I play your requiem?"

As Debonnaire divested himself of his lute, Pierre, who had been peering in from the end of the passage, now stole towards his master from pillar to pillar.

Renée stood tense.

"Where is my uncle?" she demanded, quickly, of Sybout. "Go and find him."

"But, ma'm'selle—"

"Go!" she repeated, imperiously, and, cowed by her glance, he went.

Meantime, Debonnaire was issuing instructions in a low voice to Pierre.

"Bid Van Borsum, the tavern keeper, have his New Haarlem ferry in readiness for a long passage at any moment to-morrow night. Also have three horses saddled and waiting on the northern mainland at six o'clock."

Pierre's eyes widened.

"Three horses, m'sieur?"

"Yes; three."

Pierre vanished.

Debonnaire turned to Renée. But at this moment old Raoul de Cadillac appeared with Sybout.

"Leave it to me," whispered the scheming guardian to the Dutchman. "I know his weakness. He'd kill you in a duel. He has the look of an expert swordsman."

Renée crossed hastily to her uncle.

"You must stop this—at once."

Debonnaire by now stood ready near the passage to the street.

"Gentlemen, I am waiting."

"*Dieu de Dieu!*" exclaimed Cadillac. "Are you?"

"I am waiting," said Louis, "to teach Mynheer Van Brugh a new figure in the quadrille."

Old Cadillac smiled, then frowned with assumed austerity.

"Gentlemen, as your host, I beg of you to desist—"

Van Brugh, now surly, interrupted him.

"The affair is ours."

"And so it shall be," said the French Secretary, taking up a position between the antagonists, while Renée, now on the other side of Debonnaire, stood trembling and aghast with fear.

"And so it shall be," repeated Raoul de Cadillac. "But why so ferocious? I have a plan." He nudged Van Brugh, and raised his voice to enforce Debonnaire's attention. "It is that you leave the thing to chance—say cards—or dice. The loser must leave New Amsterdam and never return. If you fight, one of you will fall—or both, and then what profit? So why not rather arrange it

thus than go at once to——" facetiously, he pointed downward.

Debonnaire looked at Renée, Cadillac craftily at Sybout. The glance of Debonnaire seemed to say: "What means this amazing expedient?" The glance of Cadillac said, as plainly as glance can speak: "Consent. I promise you success."

And Van Brugh, though dense, did not misread the signal.

"Your plan appeals to my sense of justice," he said aloud, gravely. Then turning to Louis: "What says this gentleman?"

Debonnaire smiled dreamily.

"I say that you would surely lose. Can dice avail against destiny?—a throw or two against the progress of a star? You would play against fate itself, *mynheer*—a very unequal contest." He glanced meaningly at Renée. "But my gambling days are over." He handled his rapier. "I prefer this form of recreation."

But Renée, while her uncle and Sybout stood apart for a moment in conference, shook her head.

"No, no," she urged. "For my sake—the dice instead!"

Debonnaire looked astonished.

"For your sake—your sake?" In bewilderment he sought to fathom her eyes, but they only emphasized the plea. "Already I know no other law," he murmured, then turned to the others. "On second thought, messieurs, this plan appeals to me. *Dieu*, but habit masters one. And what say you, Mynheer Van Brugh?"

"I accede," said the attorney-general, doggedly, and Renée turned away.

"Good," cried old Cadillac, with a thumb and bony forefinger pecking at his snuffbox. "Good. Quick, a rendezvous—some quiet place—to-morrow. Here come the guests for the quadrille. Where shall—" His eye caught sight of Van Borsum, who was now seating himself in the corner with his fellow musicians, while the company crowded in for the quadrille. "Good again," exclaimed Cadillac, "I have it. Suppose we say Van Borsum's tavern, near the

Haarlem ferry, at six to-morrow night?"

Debonnaire absent-mindedly took out his betting book.

"Ah," he mused, "twill be a marvelous game."

Van Brugh glanced at the book with heavy significance.

"You bet often, m'sieur?"

Debonnaire made an entry, and replied, without looking up:

"Only once—against the attorney-general."

"Only once?" repeated Sybout, with obvious incredulity.

"Yes, only once, m'sieur." He closed the book. "For I find but a single stake."

Cadillac and Van Brugh started to join Renée, who was now mingling with the guests.

"The gambler is outplayed," whispered Roaul to Sybout. "You shall win."

Debonnaire, apart, glanced off through the distant window. The music began softly.

"To-morrow," he said to himself, "at six—Van Borsum's tavern." He caught sight of Renée, who now headed the company in forming for the dance. "Van Borsum's tavern! By all the saints! The very place and hour!"

Van Brugh, on Renée's right, was bowing pompously to her. "Your partner, ma'm'selle."

Debonnaire, advancing with swift grace to her left side, bowed in turn.

"Mademoiselle, your partner."

Renée, undecided, hesitated; a moment she wavered between the bending figures—the one funereal, respectable, in black velvet; the other brilliant, gay-colored and adorably masterful. Crossing behind her and standing immediately between her and Van Brugh, Debonnaire again bowed. With sublime effrontery he had turned his back on the attorney-general.

"There is now, mademoiselle, but one direction."

Low and yet clear above the stir and rustle of the guests as they started back in surprise, rose the laughter of Renée.

Impulsively she held out her hand to him.

"Monsieur, the dance is of France, to those of France it belongs."

## CHAPTER VI.

Egbert Van Borsum's tavern, at New Haarlem, was a popular resort. No better Hollands, nor ale, nor wine, could tapster boast of in all Manhattan than was to be found at the roadhouse at the river's edge. Here came not merely travelers of fortune (whence only Heaven knew), but pleasure seekers of safer reputation from the town. Of a winter's night there were sleighing parties, always with this as their goal for a spice of play, revelry, chocolate and cake.

This evening, following the night of the assembly, the taproom of the tavern was deserted. The three or four rough-hewn tables were empty; likewise the high-backed chairs around them. On the gallery that straggled along one side of the room, the bedchamber doors were closed, and the staircase, mounting at a right angle from the tavern's entrance, for once had no cause to creak. The early gloom of winter made the room look cheerless. The fire had fallen to embers, and the only light was that of two candles flickering feebly on the mantelshelf, though it was not yet six o'clock.

Between the taproom and kitchen a door stood ajar, admitting a sound of voices. Otherwise, the silence was unbroken, save for the moan of a low wind, and a sound within the taproom, a sound very close to the hearthside, that seemed to answer the wind in a kindred key as though replying to it through the chimney.

The sound was a snore. On one of the ingle settles, Pierre le Coq lay prone. But not for long.

From the kitchen came Gretchen Van Vorsum, the tavern keeper's daughter, and with a feather duster proceeded to prepare the room for an expected sleighing party. Now Gretchen, as may have been surmised from her encounter at,

the gate with Roelof, was not wholly wooden in her Dutchness. Though not unlike a sawdust doll in costume, complexion and unruffled front, she was at least an animated doll when occasion offered.

Obviously, occasion offered in the present instance. Espying Pierre, she secreted herself behind the settle, and abstracting a feather from her duster, flirted it scarce a hair's breadth from the end of the clarion nose. The disturbed sleeper made a pass in the air with his hand, and rose to a sitting posture. But Gretchen, quick for a Dutch doll, bobbed down behind the high-backed settle, while Pierre grumbled his annoyance.

"Begone, miserable insect. Saints! What is it?"

Gretchen surreptitiously reached forward, and again applied the feather.

"Ha," cried Pierre, with another vicious but vain pass; "there he goes again. Now, a sleeper might as well try to catch the moon as—" He paused, listening. Instead of an insect's hum, he heard something very like a giggle. Jumping to his feet on the settle, he looked down over its back. "Oh, ho!" he cried. "Tis a bird of another feather." He reached for her, but she eluded him, and, laughing, ran clattering up the stairs to the gallery.

"You said truly, M'sieur Pierre," she twitted him. "'Twould be no less difficult to catch the moon."

Pierre, one hand rubbing the sleep from his eyes, clapped the other to his heart.

"Ah, Mam'selle de la Lune," said he. Then he frowned, and looked at the clock. "Come, Ma'm'selle Gretchen, have you ordered the three horses?"

"Um-m," assented Gretchen.

"Are they saddled?"

"Um-m."

"And fleet of foot?" She leaned complaisantly on the gallery rail, and stared down at him. "Um-m-m," she nodded, blandly.

"Um-m-m?" he inquired, catching the habit.

"Um-m-m!" she assured him, with finality.

"Well, well," said he, as she clattered down again; "'tis the cooing of a dove. Faith, Pierre le Coq has need of a wife who coos instead of cackling."

He was about to supplement his words with a fitting action, when a sound of sleigh bells reached their ears.

"Ah," said he, stepping back, "perhaps it is my master."

The Dutch doll appeared to blush. She could not have been all sawdust.

"Now, there's a gentleman," she said, warmly; "there's a gentleman a maid might gladly die for—yet they say dark things about him."

"Pouf!" said Pierre, "mere gossip."

Her voice became a whisper. Her eyes were terrified saucers.

"Do you know," she said, "they even murmur, *spy*?"

"Oh, ho," laughed Le Coq; "spy, forsooth!"

"Yes, and 'tis no light matter. You may laugh, but Roelof, of the guard by whose gate you entered, is missing. If there has been foul play, Heaven help you and your master." She grew suddenly persuasive, and smiled on him coaxingly. "Now, tell me, good Pierre, what is your errand here?"

Pierre pursed up his lips, and puckered up his eyes, and held his head on one side, as who should say: "So you're not a little fool, now, are you? Well, nor am I?" He shook his head, and shrugged his shoulders.

"What do I know? Oh, nothing—less than nothing. This very day my master almost ran me through because last night I prated."

"Well," said Gretchen, half to herself, "I hope there's naught amiss, he is so fair a gentleman."

The sound of the sleigh bells grew loud, and ceased. In a moment the door opened, and the subject of Gretchen's approbation entered the room.

He turned to Pierre.

"The horses?"

"Are ready, m'sieur."

"Good. But I may need only two—one for you and one for me. I can tell you shortly. Are the horses swift, and fit for a long journey?"

"Yes, m'sieur. I chose them with great care."

To the tavern keeper's daughter Debonnaire said: "I shall not need my room to-night. I leave within the hour."

He had scarcely ascended to his room, and shut the door behind him, when from the road came again the sound of sleigh bells, clear on the winter air.

The second comer was old Monsieur de Cadillac, the French Secretary.

"Good-evening, Gretchen," said he, striving to conceal under a chirrupy manner an evident feeling of uneasiness and anxiety. "Is your father here?"

Gretchen courtesied with the grace of a clock-work toy.

"In the kitchen, m'sieur."

"Good. Then tell him the French Secretary would speak with him at once."

"Certainly, m'sieur," and she hurried out.

"Well," said De Cadillac, eying Pierre; "now, who the deuce are you?"

"Oh, nobody, m'sieur—nobody."

"Hum. It would be well, little vagabond, if you were less than nobody. I have private business with the tavern keeper."

Pierre bobbed and withdrew.

Making sure of the fellow's departure, the wily French Secretary now drew from his pocket a pair of dice, and lightly weighed them in his palm. He smiled, and looked about him furtively, then stood blinking at the dice, till Van Borsum answered his summons. Quickly the ivory cubes were replaced, and Cadillac drew aside the tavern keeper. For several minutes, the wiry little spider and Egbert, of the round paunch, stood conferring, not above a whisper, in the chimney corner.

But the interview was of brief duration. Once more there came a rising melody of sleigh bells, this time not of one set, but of several; and finally a great clashing jingle, from the midst of which rose gay voices and laughter in the frosty air.

"Lord!" exclaimed Van Borsum, with

dropping jaw. "I forgot. It must be the sleighing party."

"Party!" gasped De Cadillac. "But we expected to be alone."

There came a knock at the door.

"Oh, m'sieur," said Egbert, scratching his head and eying the latch; "what in the world shall I do?"

Monsieur fidgeted.

"They will have their bread and chocolate in the parlor, won't they—not here?"

"Oh, yes," said Van Borsum, "certainly in the parlor, m'sieur."

Cadillac hesitated. The raps beat a loud tattoo.

"Admit them," nodded the secretary. "I'll bustle them off."

"Ah, m'sieur le secretaire," said one of the guests, a pink and white damsel, the first to enter, "what a surprise!"

Old Cadillac laughed nervously and bowed.

"An unlooked for pleasure," said he, wryly.

"What!" said another, "did you not know? How came Renée not to tell you she was coming?"

The secretary started. "Renée! Here! Now! Gad," thought he, "here's a pretty *contrtemps*!" But he said aloud: "How delightful! No doubt she wished to surprise me. *Dieu*, she succeeded," he added, mentally.

"Here and now," said Renée, emerging from the group with a mischievous courtesy to her guardian.

He appeared suddenly to grow gracious, to play the host.

"Come," said he, as they trooped in, and cast off their furs and laughed, all aglow with youth and winter; "come," said the ancient schemer; "you must be chilled with the ride. Let us have chocolate served in the parlor. Come, ladies." Never had they seen him so thoughtful, so courtly, so assiduous in attention. They were flattered and cajoled into the parlor almost before they were aware.

"Quick," said Cadillac, meaningly, to the tavern keeper, as the company disappeared; "bread and chocolate in the parlor."

In a few moments the taproom was

deserted. A cat stole across from door to door and vanished. The candles, as a rule, snuffed with care, were reeling drunkenly, forgotten to-night by the disquieted Gretchen. Mischief brewed in the air, and the candles seemed to feel it. From either end of the mantelpiece they blinked and sputtered with maudlin apprehension, and the cat as she passed mewed at them like a creature haunted.

The clock struck six. A cracked bell emitted six flat strokes in the gloom. And as the hour sounded, back from the parlor stole Renée, and out from his bedroom on the gallery above her came Debonnaire.

For a moment she did not see him—not until she heard the stairs creak as he started to come down. Glancing up, she flushed crimson. He paused on the stairs, and with a hand on the banisters stood looking down at her.

"Mademoiselle, I thank you for this tryst." He came down and joined her. There in the shadows, leered at by the dripping candles, railed at by the wind, they stood close together, swiftly exchanging whispers and glances in the flying moments that were theirs.

"Last night, mademoiselle, I said I would *convince* you. I did not say *explain*. In truth, I have no explanation—only this: I did not know you when I made the wager."

She drew back.

"Then you *did* make it?"

He inclined his head.

"Mademoiselle, it is the truth. Ah, yes; but an unknown woman prompted the bet—a mere idea—a face, not you—only a dream—not really you—not *you*, who are so real, so gloriously real. A thousand times in the last few hours I've cursed the night I made that wager. The memory is torture. Yes, yes; but also a thousand times I've blessed the night I met you. Oh, mademoiselle, had I but known you—had I but for an instant looked into your eyes, one passion only had possessed me. You do not know—you cannot feel—"

Renée laid a restraining hand on his arm. Her eyes were melting and ambient. The flashes of ridicule last night

so blinding had softened this evening to a kinder light.

"Enough, m'sieur. I, too, have the blood of France in my veins. *Mon Dieu!* Do you think I'm pigeon-hearted? Was it a gamble? Well, so is life. And are you a mystery? Well, so are we all. So are life and death—and—and love. But had you made that wager after having known me—had you betted on Renée de Cadillac instead of a mere miniature—then, m'sieur, I would have spurned you forever."

He nodded.

"And rightly, mademoiselle. How well you understand it! Yet this business here now—"

She smiled, and again restrained him.

"You're not to blame for this. Was it not I who bade you choose the dice instead of weapons?"

"Yes, yes; but why?"

Her lashes drooped. She receded from him, but paused near the parlor door.

"Oh, m'sieur, he is a wonderful swordsman. And you? How could you, a lute player—" She hesitated, frightened at her temerity.

"What!" cried Louis, his eyes on fire with anger. "You doubted my skill? Oh, is this your blood of France? By Heaven—"

"Nay; forgive me," said Renée, in a voice that was hardly audible. "Perhaps, after all, I'm but a woman."

Debonnaire started toward her.

"Mademoiselle! Renée—"

But before he could reach her, she opened the door, passed out, and closed it again behind her. In a moment he heard her laughing carelessly with the chocolate bibbers in the parlor.

He had scarcely time to recover, when a muffled sound of galloping hoofs reached his ears, a thick voice called aloud for the stable boy, and in another moment Sybourt entered.

"You come late, m'sieur." Debonnaire laid aside his coat on the back of a chair, and smiled a greeting. The smile might have faded quickly had he noticed that through an oversight he had left his credentials in the pocket of his

coat—the credentials containing his real name. A corner of the paper stuck out just visible. But the Dutchman, intent on the coming game, saw only Debonnaire.

"I was detained," said he, "on urgent matters."

Debonnaire crossed to the hearth, and taking from the mantelshelf a long clay pipe, filled and nonchalantly lighted it at one of the candles.

"I accept your apology."

The Hollander frowned.

"I offer none. There are grave rumors—charges, I may say—against you." He strode to the kitchen door, and summoning Gretchen, bade her bring dice cups on the instant. Then again he turned to Louis.

"Grave charges, I repeat. And there's no saying how they'll end."

Debonnaire blew a ring of smoke toward the high rafters.

"Like that, *mynheer*, in mere nothingness."

"Or even death," was the pleasant rejoinder.

Debonnaire shrugged.

"As I said, *mynheer*."

Gretchen reappeared with the dice, and placed one set at either end of a drinking table between the opponents. While she withdrew, wondering, to the kitchen, her father, who had just left it, looked in from the roadway, watching through the window.

The players failed to notice old Cadillac, who had cautiously entered from the parlor, and now stood observing them from behind one of the high-backed settles—a position whence he could signal to Van Borsum as prearranged.

"As a matter of form," said Debonnaire, "let us test the dice with a throw or two that shall count for nothing. No insinuation, of course, *mynheer*; but in these roadhouses one cannot be too careful."

"By all means," nodded Van Brugh; "it is the custom."

Having satisfied themselves that the dice were true, they were about to cast in earnest, when a volley of oaths out in the roadway, and a general hullabaloo arrested their attention.

Suddenly above the uproar rose the voice of Pierre le Coq:

"Help—*m'sieur*—an outrage!"

"Dieu," exclaimed Debonnaire, "can there be foul play?" He hastened out, and Sybout in bewilderment followed.

As the tavern door banged behind them, old Cadillac noiselessly crossed the taproom.

Quickly substituting the dice from his own pocket for the pair in Sybout's cup, he pocketed the latter, and smiled. Could the thing go amiss? Would they change positions? No. Each would naturally return to the cup he had used before. And if not, he could trust his ready strategy to transpose the cups at the last moment. With a shaking finger he took pinch after pinch of snuff to allay his nervous fear, fussing the while about the table.

"Dieu," said he to himself, "I'll warrant the attorney-general never played with loaded dice before. Thus the spider plays destiny and helps Renée de Cadillac to a husband." He caught sight of Debonnaire's coat, and the corner of a white paper projecting from the pocket. "What's this?" thought he. "Ah, a document." He drew it out, and shot a glance at the door, then hurried with closer scrutiny to the candles, and examined the seal. "What! the fleur-de-lys and crown?" He compared the seal with a large signet ring on his fob—the official seal ring of the French Secretary of New Amsterdam. The seals, of course, were identical. A smile of wary cunning crept into his deep-set eyes and wrinkled his old face. He would open this interesting document, then calmly rescal it again and replace it when the first opportunity offered.

With another furtive glance at the door, he dexterously opened the paper, taking care not to mar its edges. When he saw at a look its contents, he started, almost dropped it, and steadied himself against the mantel. Louis de Cadillac! Louis—the rich—the famous—the head of his family in France! It seemed incredible. But there was no time to think. The loaded dice were in Sybout's box—the wrong box. He must immediately transpose the boxes. His

mind worked with lightning calculation. He had favored the wrong suitor. But there was yet time. He started toward the table.

At this moment the tavern door opened, and the players returned.

"What was the trouble?" asked Cadillac, quick to ascribe his agitation to the affair without. "What was wrong? I had begun to fear——"

"Oh, it was nothing," laughed Debonnaire, seating himself at the table. "Van Borsum for some vain grudge had bidden his stablemen throw my servant out of the tavern."

"Nay, nay, m'sieur," expostulated Cadillac, behind the table.

"Yes, but the fracas is over now. I have demanded an apology for him in the shape of an excellent dinner. And the meek Van Borsum has already started to comply."

Van Brugh seated himself, and drew off his riding gloves. Old Cadillac leaned far forward, and wished them a pleasant game. As he did so, he took up the dice cups, and with the air of a master of ceremonies offered them to the players. In the moment of this polite attention the transposition was dexterously effected.

"Come," said Debonnaire, "the game. We lose time." He rose, and, with a foot on the chair beside him, stood waiting with a hand on his cup. Van Brugh, still seated, leaned forward to the table. "I am ready," said he. "Three throws in five."

"Agreed," said Van Brugh, uneasily.

"Nay," interposed old Cadillac, in dismay. "Why not one?"

"Because, m'sieur," said Debonnaire, "if you'll forgive me, I prefer it so." He smiled at his dice cup, and took it up. "Little dice, fall well; remember my desire." He looked up at Sybout. "Mynheer, 'tis a fascinating cup we toast in."

Van Brugh with an impatient shrug made the first throw.

"Ill luck!" he exclaimed, "a two and four."

Debonnaire slowly rattled his dice.

"That, at all events, is easily beaten." He threw.

"Yes," said Sybout, "you did not need those to do it."

Debonnaire glanced at the dice.

"Ah, sixes," said he. "Well, destiny was ever an extremist. Now, it would have shown more taste if——"

"Never mind," said Van Brugh, curtly; "that is but once," and he threw a second time.

Debonnaire nodded approval.

"That's better. Two threes. It begins to awake my interest." He threw and cupped the dice, keeping them covered while he smiled with maddening tranquillity at Van Brugh.

Old Cadillac was shivering behind them. He drew away toward the kitchen door.

"Gretchen," he called, in a low voice; "bring me a glass of Hollands."

"Lift off," said the Dutchman, to his opponent, unable to brook the torment.

"Nay, not so fast," objected Louis. "You fail to appreciate that pleasant agony men call suspense. Now, in truth, I hope to lose this time. It intensifies the hazard."

Van Brugh was gnawing his moustache.

"Lift off, I say."

"Then see," said Debonnaire.

"By my soul!" ejaculated Van Brugh. "Again sixes—again the highest."

Debonnaire looked lightly apologetic.

"How awkward of the fates!" he commented. "They show a certain greed in my behalf that's almost vulgar."

Old Cadillac, watching from the door, smiled, though his teeth were chattering. When Gretchen brought him his Hollands he drained the glass at a gulp. Then he crossed slowly to the parlor door, and there paused to look back, fascinated by the game. Gretchen, instinctively feeling that something was amiss, cowered watchful in the shadows of the ingle.

"There is yet a chance," said Van Brugh, with gloomy foreboding.

He cast his dice grimly—the third and last time.

"Excellent!" said Debonnaire, rising. "Two fives. This time you surely beat me."

Sybout inclined his head with satisfaction. Debonnaire indolently rolled his dice across the table. As they stopped, he started in amazement.

"Sixes!" he cried. "Yet again sixes. Oh, this is monstrous. Not a pang!" He looked around for Cadillac with a careless laugh, but the French Secretary had vanished. And Gretchen was hidden by the ingle shadows.

Van Brugh stared at the dice.

"By all the fiends," he muttered. "Yet again the highest!" Suddenly he seized Debonnaire's dice in his hand, and rolled them several times across the table. "Again!" he exclaimed, "and again."

He caught up the little cubes in a tense fist, and glared squarely at Debonnaire.

"These dice," he said, "are loaded!" He threw them at the feet of his opponent. "There! That, at least, is a winning cast! You catch my meaning?"

Debonnaire in amazement looked down at the dice on the floor.

"And yet again sixes," he said, slowly.

"This cowardice," declared Van Brugh, "caps the proof that you're a swindler and a villain."

Debonnaire started toward him impulsively, but contained himself.

"It is on my lips, *mynheer*, to observe, 'You lie!' But from Louis le Debonnaire this is unnecessary. His rapier alone shall make denial. The weapon's in my room."

He ascended the stairs. As he did so, Van Brugh went in haste to the tavern door.

"Your window will afford you no escape. I shall stand beneath it."

Debonnaire paused in the gallery, and smiled down.

"Now, bless you for those words, *mynheer*." He held out a hand in a gesture of benediction. "Bless you for those words. This mention of your watchfulness defines the issue. I was planning some uncomfortable wound—your arm—your leg—but I do dislike suspicious persons. Their hearts must, indeed, be puny things—too small for

so large and honorable a world—too sordid. There's but one way to touch those hearts, *mynheer*, and that's with a point of steel!"

"Oh, make haste!" broke in Van Brugh. "Waste no more words."

"One way only," mused Debonnaire, "to deal with such hearts. They must be sent back to the devil who spawned them."

Van Brugh swore between his teeth.

"Make haste, I say."

"Well, well," laughed Louis. "I would not chain a soul to earth that would be going." He broke into a catch of his song: "Lover of life and devil-may-care—" and so disappeared into his bedroom.

Gretchen ran to the kitchen door.

"Pierre—Pierre—quick!"

"What now?" said Pierre, entering the taproom sleepily.

"Your master is in danger. The attorney-general and M'sieur Debonnaire diced here, and m'sieur, I think was the winner."

"As usual," nodded Pierre.

Gretchen looked fearfully about her. The attorney-general kept guard outside under Debonnaire's window.

"But Mynheer Sybout Van Brugh threw the dice at his feet, and said they were loaded!"

"Ha! The attorney-general must be mad. Has he a leaning toward the grave?"

But Gretchen's round face wore a serious frown.

"Oh, good Pierre, this is no laughing matter. I wouldn't have thought it of him—false dice!" She picked up the cups. "False dice! Outrageous!"

All at once her eye caught sight of numerous specks of dust on the table. With a Dutch scrupulosity in matters of housekeeping, Gretchen seldom overlooked such an unwelcome sight. Dust was the bane of her life. Always at a loss to account for its ubiquitous persistence against her watchful eye, she was now more than ever surprised, even startled, to find it so thick on the top of a table she had attacked with her feather duster not an hour before.

Suddenly Gretchen amazed Pierre by

leaning close to the table, and sniffing at the specks. As she straightened up she sneezed violently, but her face, when the distorting effect of the sneeze had left it placid again, wore a smile of triumph and importance. Pointing to the suspicious granules on the table, she put a capable hand behind Pierre's head and forcing it downward, compelled him to emulate her mysterious method of investigation. Whereupon Pierre, too, sneezed violently.

"Well," said he, "what of it?"

She frowned, and uttered one word, in a whisper of astounding discovery:

"Snuff!"

"Um-m?" queried Pierre, in perplexity.

"Um-m!" she nodded, with a knowing blink.

"Um-m-m?" he drawled. "Well and what?"

"Just this," said Gretchen, coming closer to him. "The snuff was not there when I brought the dice boxes. I dusted the table before the two gentlemen came."

"Ah!" said Pierre, beginning to see light.

Gretchen nodded to herself.

"Yes, I understand it all now. There must have been a plot. Did they not put you out of the tavern?"

"I should say they did, but my master put me back."

"Exactly. They put you out to make him put you back."

"What? To make—how do you mean? Nonsense."

"No, not nonsense. I mean they wanted to draw your master and the attorney-general outside after the test throw so the dice could be changed. I saw my father standing at the window. He was made to do that and to start the uproar."

Pierre stuck his tongue in his cheek.

"I begin to know a thing or two," said he, dryly.

She pointed to the telltale snuff.

"The Dutch gentlemen do not use snuff. Leastwise, not one of them that's here. They smoke and smoke, but they snuff never."

"Who, then?" queried Pierre, scratching his head.

Gretchen pulled his ear to her lips.

"Old Monsieur de Cadillac," she whispered fearsomely.

Pierre started.

"*Sacré nom!* The French Secretary—"

"Gretchen, what's wrong?" Mademoiselle de Cadillac stood in the parlor doorway. "Quick, tell me. Something has happened. My uncle shakes with a chill."

"Huh!" muttered Pierre, to himself. "He called me less than nobody."

"Answer me, girl," commanded Renée. "What is it?"

When Gretchen replied there was a gulp in her voice.

"Oh, ma'm'selle, they threw, and the dice were loaded."

"Loaded!?"

"Yes, yes, ma'm'selle—and Mynheer Sybout Van Brugh accused M'sieur le Debonnaire. They are going to fight." She paused, listening. They heard the voice of Debonnaire singing in his bedroom. The tone had a trace of melancholy.

Lover of life—the world is fair,  
Yet into the night goes Debonnaire.

He came out on the gallery, but they failed to see him, for at the same moment Sybout, with sword drawn, entered by the tavern door.

Renée's mind was in a turmoil. Loaded dice! It was false! She confronted Van Brugh.

"What evil thing is this I hear? You dare accuse M'sieur le Debonnaire of playing with loaded dice? Preposterous! M'sieur is a gentleman. Not he, but some one else is guilty."

Van Brugh strode towards her angrily.

"Ma'm'selle, this is too much! You dare—"

"Yes, I dare!" said Renée, coldly. "M'sieur le Debonnaire is innocent, on that I'd stake my life."

As she spoke, her uncle, followed by the members of the sleighing party, who felt that something uncommon was

afoot, came curiously from the parlor into the taproom. One and all they crowded in at the door, wondering at Renée, and Van Brugh's drawn sword, and the terrified French Secretary, who could not now without notice escape from his position.

Then they caught sight of Debonnaire on the gallery, where he stood, rapier in hand, overlooking the scene.

Sybout was face to face with Renée.

"Speak," he demanded; "now, tell us. Whom do you accuse?"

Before she could answer, Gretchen jumped up on the settle by the hearth that all might see and hear her.

"I know who is guilty," she said, and her round, blue, saucerlike eyes stared openly at old de Cadillac.

At this the French Secretary's face went so ghastly ashen that even the phlegmatic little Gretchen Van Borsum visibly shuddered, and then, to their surprise, clapped a hand over each of her eyes to shut out the sight of that terror-struck countenance.

"I know who put loaded dice in the cup of M'sieur Debonnaire," she said. "It was M'sieur—"

She was interrupted by Renée, who came close to her, and in a quick, angry whisper bade her keep silence. Renée's eyes blazed. An intuition told her that the honor of her family was at stake—the honor of the Cadillacs. And though she had little affection for her intriguing uncle, she would not stand by and have his name smirched—the family name—even to clear her lover. Debonnaire would find a way to clear himself. Even though Gretchen's astounding charge might be true, the world must never know that infamy.

But Gretchen was Dutch to the core. "What I say is true," she persisted. "The table was dusted before the dice were cast. Yet after the loaded dice were placed there—snuff lay on the table! Now, the only person here who uses snuff—" There came a creak from the stairway. The sound caught her ear. She lowered her hands and looked.

Debonnaire stood on the stairs half-

way down, and when he caught her eye he frowned at her.

The listeners stirred. They were looking up half expectantly at the Frenchman. Immediately he shared with Gretchen their silent stare and wonder. Renée, too, looked up at him—looked up as though instinctively relying on him for aid. Oh, if he could save her family from this shame!

Gretchen, Dutch to the end, defied his frown.

"The only person here who uses snuff," she said, "is—"

"Louis le Debonnaire." The voice quickly interrupting her was that of Louis himself, as he stood smiling at them from the stairs. Then, as they started back, and a low whisper of amazement ran from one to another, and every eye was upturned to him, he took from his pocket a silver box, and from the silver box, with a courtly air, a pinch of snuff.

When the first lull of surprise was passed, and Gretchen, dumfounded, stepped down tearfully to Pierre, and M'sieur de Cadillac, suddenly regaining the use of his faculties, hurried off to the parlor—when that first pause was broken, Debonnaire descended the staircase. At the foot of the stairs, Renée met him, and the look in her eyes was his best applause.

"Twas your honor," she whispered, "for my sake—for the sake of my family."

He smiled in a way she could not understand.

"For the family of the Cadillacs," he answered, in a low voice; then laughing; "nay, it was merely a pinch of snuff."

Van Brugh, whose density through it all had held him silent in heavy wonder, spoke to the Frenchman, in a dull voice:

"Are you ready?"

Debonnaire bowed.

"Ready, m'sieur, and waiting."

They crossed swords.

But the duel was again forestalled. A heavy sound of muffled galloping—the hoofbeats of several horses—and in another moment, Roelof, the sentinel,

with a dozen picked men of the Dutch guard, burst headlong into the tap-room.

Roelof saluted the attorney-general.

"A spy, *mynheer*. This Frenchman is a spy. He and his man overcame me—left me gagged in the forest—and forced their way into the town."

Van Brugh sheathed his weapon.

"A spy? Indeed, I would have sworn it."

"Yes," panted Roelof; "I had starved to death—nearly strangled—had not a runner found me——"

Van Brugh turned to the guard.

"Seize him."

Two of the men obeyed.

"Him and his servant."

Two more made fast the arms of Pierre.

Renée was close to Debonnaire.

"Tell them it is not so. Tell them."

He smiled, and shrugged his shoulders.

"I cannot, mademoiselle." He turned to Pierre. "Fellow, why did you not release this blunderbuss. I told you to go last night and offer him his liberty provided he swore to silence."

"Oh, *m'sieur*," wailed Pierre, quaking. "I would, indeed, have done so—but, then, the ball and so much wine——"

Van Brugh laughed aloud, but not with humor.

"A costly entertainment for you both. The punishment for spies is hanging."

Renée whispered quickly to Debonnaire:

"I beseech you—nay, I command—your true name, whatever it be—will that not help you?"

"Well, mademoiselle, if you command, though it goes hard against the grain to do so." He turned to Sybout. "I'll worst you in *this* game, too, *mynheer*. I have credentials. When you read them you will dare no longer to abase a gentleman." He nodded toward his coat on the back of the chair. "You'll find a passport in that pocket."

Roelof searched the coat. There was a tense moment of waiting. At last the sentry held up the coat before the attorney-general.

"There's nothing in it."

Debonnaire started forward in amazement. Then he bowed as if to destiny.

"Gentlemen, I am your prisoner."

## CHAPTER VII.

When the moon rose over the river and the woods, and turned the snow-covered road from the tavern to the town to a silver strand, its light revealed a strange cavalcade pursuing the way homeward. First went a sleigh at full speed, its occupant silent and brooding. Then came several mounted soldiers of the Dutch guard bound for the fort, and led by Roelof. Between their files, well watched, trudged Louis le Debonnaire and Pierre le Coq, afoot in the snow and shackled.

In the wake of these came the cause of all the trouble, old Raoul de Cadillac, bidding the driver of his sleigh go slow in order not to overtake the prisoners and their escort. Naturally *M'sieur de Cadillac* felt squeamish at the thought of a meeting with the man who in his stead was paying the piper. But the French Secretary had a duty to perform in the privacy of his house this evening, and though constrained to proceed slowly he was no less impatient to arrive at his destination.

Far in the rear of the French Secretary came the chocolate party in their sleighs, all save one figure—that of Sybout Van Brugh, who, riding beside them, kept up an unwontedly easy share in the talk, being for once in his life in buoyant spirits. Fortune in the end had elected him the winner.

But where was the woman won? This misgiving now and again turned him moody as he rode, and they saw him spur forward his horse, then draw back all the heavier on the bridle, as though impatience and restraint were at odds in his turbid brain. Good cause! Renée was somewhere far ahead. She had left the tavern even in advance of the soldiers.

Thus the cavalcade in several divisions passed into the town.

"A less triumphal entry," said Pierre, to his master, "than that of our first

coming. Now, for once in our lives, are the tables turned."

Debonnaire laughed. In spite of the check to his adventure, his heart beat high with hope at thought of Renée.

"Be not too sure, Good rascal, remember this: Fate is on our side. And fate is ever the last laugher, come what may before the end."

Pierre sighed. This optimistic philosophy seemed scarcely fitting to their present condition. To swear by the friendliness of fate while laboring afoot over snow and ice, with Dutch curses ever in one's ears, and the only prospect a noose at sunrise, showed a degree of faith that might be all very well for the master, but hardly sufficed for the man.

And so, when at last the town was reached, and the two were left to their own devices within the walls of a cell—Pierre stretched out on a pallet of straw in one corner, sought to remonstrate with Debonnaire on his dalliance with fate, and concerned himself most with the probable hour set by Dutch jurisprudence for hanging by the neck until dead. In this interesting argument Debonnaire continued as he had begun, a singer of ballads and a dreamer of dreams—with a laugh in his eye at the darkest moment. But Pierre, poor soul, had no light o' love to cheer him, and could only see in his mind's eye that ultimate noose before him.

"Ah, m'sieur," said he, finally, "I fear the Dutch have no priests among them. They are of a different persuasion, and cannot shrive us, and so, alas! will send us—pardon, I mean they will send *me*, m'sieur—to the devil into the bargain."

Debonnaire laughed aloud in the dark and chill air of the cell. "Pierre, my knave," said he, "there's only one devil to fear at the present moment, and his name is Mynheer Sybout Van Brugh, the attorney-general."

On arriving at his house, the French Secretary repaired at once to the library, and before divesting himself of his hat and furs, impatiently crossed to a long bell rope and pulled it vigorously.

A servant appeared, and Cadillac inquired if his mistress was yet at home.

The answer, "Yes, m'sieur, in her room," seemed to reassure her guardian.

"Good," said he, "now fetch me lights. Quick, a candelabrum—here." He indicated a long writing table.

The need of light was very apparent. Save for the moonbeams shining in through the glass panes of a double door that gave on a wide balcony one flight above the ground, there was no illumination in the library, and the gloom hung heavy in every corner.

Near a door at one end of the room which led to Renée's bedroom and the rest of the sleeping apartments, stood the massive table littered with documents. At the other end of the library, a second door, masked by a heavy portière, opened to the stairway which led to the main entrance of the house. It was by this door that the secretary had just entered, and toward which his eyes were drawn apprehensively, as though fearing he were followed by some unwelcome guest.

When at last the candelabrum stood at his elbow and the servant had again withdrawn, the master drew free breath. He fell immediately to work. Taking from his pocket the passport of Debonnaire, who to him was now none other than the famous Louis de Cadillac, Captain of Carignan-Salières, he held a stick of wax over one of the candle flames, and proceeded to apply his signet ring in order to replace intact the seal of the fleur-de-lys and crown.

This done, he rose with relief, and again resumed his furs. There would now be little difficulty in saving his esteemed kinsman. He would first, by dint of his official privileges as French Secretary, gain entrance to his fellow countryman in the fort, and return the paper with some facile story of its discovery on the road, where doubtless it had fallen from the owner's pocket, and would then, on demanding its purport, make plain the case to Sybout, who dare not refuse to credit so distinct a warranty from his excellency, Daniel de Rémy, Governor of Canada.

This was the plan that outlined itself in his nimble brain while he prepared himself once more for the wintry night.

But here again Raoul de Cadillac schemed in vain. As he wrapped his neckcloth close about his throat, who should appear at the door from the stairway but Sybout Van Brugh himself. The attorney-general was evidently in haste. He came in at a headlong pace, and without so much as a word or a knock to announce him.

"Why so fast?" exclaimed the secretary. "What now, *mynheer*?"

Cadillac stood near the balcony doors, taking his hat from the chair where he had laid it. His face was well in the moonlight. It was wrinkled, not with anxiety, but with satisfaction—so much so that Sybout, whose wits had been whetted, perhaps by clashing of late with Debonnaire's, noticed the expression and wondered. Then the gaze of the Dutchman, quicker than usual, moved round to the flickering candles.

What had the old intriguer been doing at the table? Was it in his power by the aid of a written demand—Sybout started, and crossing quickly to the writing table, stood with his back to it, facing his host doggedly. He had known that the charges of Gretchen were true. Old Cadillac, for some unaccountable reason, had sought to betray him by substituting false dice in favor of Debonnaire. The most rudimentary knowledge of character would have convicted the intriguer and cleared the French adventurer. It was a natural process to reason from this that old Cadillac was no longer to be trusted in any move.

Sybout stood stolidly between the table and his host. Under the candelabrum he saw a document bearing the name of Debonnaire. If there were aught in that paper that might avail to save the Frenchman it must never see the light. These, perhaps, were the credentials that Debonnaire with so much confidence had relied upon to save him in the tavern. If so, they must stay lost. He had come in the nick of time. Of course this was scarcely in accord with the functions of the attorney-general of New Amsterdam, but to-night Van Brugh played a different part. He was not the attorney-general of New Am-

sterdam, but the lover of Renée de Cadillac, and the enemy of Louis le Debonnaire—a double rôle that evidently permitted him a free interpretation of the law.

The secretary began to feel oppressed, uneasy. "Well, *mynheer*—well?"

"I seek your niece," said Van Brugh, at last. "The time has come."

Cadillac shook his head. The moment demanded candor. He must deal with this battering-ram after the ram's own manner.

"The time has not come," he made bold to retort, "and, *Mynheer* Van Brugh, the time is never coming. She will not marry you, she will never marry you now whatever happens."

Van Brugh sneered.

"Will not? Have no fear, *m'sieur*. She will, and that most expeditiously."

"Nay," said Cadillac, "I no longer sanction this alliance."

"That's plain," nodded Sybout. "The dice showed that you had other plans. Yet I shall marry Mademoiselle Renée de Cadillac." As he said this the Hollander slipped a hand back and took up the paper.

Cadillac started forward, betraying himself by his action.

"What means this document?" Sybout held it behind him. "What means it?"

Cadillac kept a calm front.

"It means, *mynheer*, that you have lost and Debonnaire has won."

As the secretary declared himself, Renée appeared behind Sybout on the threshold of the door from the sleeping apartments.

"Ho!" said Van Brugh, "here's a pretty jest. So I have lost, you say, and Debonnaire has won. A peculiar way of winning, I call it. They hang him by the neck in half an hour."

Renée suppressed a cry, but still she did not betray her presence. Cadillac was staggered.

"What! *Dieu*, this is summary justice—devilish summary injustice, I should say. *Sacré nom!* You Dutch are slow at it, but when you catch fire, it's the fire of hell." Then his man-

ner suddenly changed. A new tactic occurred to him. "But you mistake, *mynheer*. This document will save him. He is the victim of an error. He is above reproach. That proves him so. *Mynheer*, I'll thank you for it."

"How came you by this paper?" demanded Van Brugh, still persistent in keeping it behind him.

"Oh, *mynheer*," said Cadillac, "what matters how I came by it? The evidence therein is indisputable."

"How fortunate!" said Van Brugh, smiling.

"What?"

The Dutch face had become bland.

"How fortunate the credentials are forthcoming in time to save his life."

"Indeed, yes. I shall take it instantly to the fort!"

"You forget, m'sieur, that is the privilege of the attorney-general."

"Then come with me," said the secretary. "There's not a moment to lose."

"No, not yet, not until— Curse it! Who's that—" He turned sharply. The paper behind him had been snatched from his fingers. Renée stood confronting him across the table, the document in her hand. She quivered. Her cheeks burned. Her eyes, too, were on fire, and when she spoke her voice was low with the faintly reverberant tone of a perfect self-control.

"Go to the fort," she bade her uncle. "Quick!"

"But you?" stammered the old man.

"For the love of Heaven, make haste," cried Renée. "Why should you fear for me? Make haste. You must free him immediately. Your oath and bond at the fort will at least gain him a parole."

Cadillac, delaying no longer, hurried from the room.

The moon flooded in at the balcony doors. The candles flickered. Sybout and Renée stood facing each other.

"Mademoiselle, you must give me that document."

"By what right do you ask it?"

"As attorney-general I demand it from you."

"And if I refuse?"

Sybout shrugged.

"Oh, then you prevent me from sav-

ing this Frenchman from the hangman's rope."

"You?"

"Yes, I. With that document I can save his life."

Renée nodded knowingly.

"Yes, *mynheer*, or lose it. I cannot trust you."

Then Van Brugh bethought him of a crafty move.

"Oh, ma'm'selle, have I loved you so long in vain? Has not my passion ever been sincere? I read your heart and know, alas, too well, it is not for me. Already it is his. Do you not see? My only desire is to save him for you, and though it cuts me cruelly—I would make you happy. You will give me the paper—quick!"

To this harangue Renée made answer with a mocking laugh.

"How subtle are the Dutch," said she, "in subterfuge! The cruelty is of another kind, *mynheer!* 'Tis in your eyes. You cannot deceive me. I keep this paper."

Van Brugh started fiercely toward her, but she eluded him with ease and kept the table between them. From her vantage point she smiled at him in scorn— baited him with the mockery of her laughter. And nonchalant as though at a ball, she fanned her burning cheeks with a fan that hung at her waist on a gold chatelaine.

Van Brugh, driven desperate by her coolness, strove to match it with a like *sang-froid*. Turning on his heel he went to the door leading to the staircase, locked it and put the key in his pocket.

"Then let the popinjay hang." He crossed to the door that led to the sleeping chambers and likewise made that secure. "I tell you, ma'm'selle, he shall be hanged unless you give the paper up to me."

Renée was receding slowly toward the bell rope.

"I will not."

"Then keep it," said Sybout, shrugging. "I do not want it. Do with it as you will. But here you stay till his life has paid the forfeit. What I want and what I swear I'll have is you—you

yourself. I am resolved. Yesterday I set my men to capture you outside the town—merely a trifling game to break your spirit. Then came this Frenchman——”

“Praise Heaven!” said Renée, near the bell rope.

“He spoiled my plan and ever since he has goaded me until at last the game is earnest.” While he spoke Van Brugh kept his eyes fixed on her. He saw her intention. “The game is earnest,” he repeated. “I trifle no more. I mean to have you body and soul.”

He started forward quickly. Her hand darted for the bell rope—too late. Catching the cord high above her hand, Van Brugh severed it completely with a cut of his sword. The tassel and a foot of the rope dangled in her hand. But again she laughed in derision.

“M’sieur, you play the vandal.” She tossed aside the tassel.

Van Brugh stood over her.

“Not only with a bell rope,” said he. “You understand? There is another rope that will not be cut until your lover is strangled.”

Renée shrank from him, quivering.

“Oh, if only it were my life!”

He bent close to her.

“It is your love I want. Your love——”

“Never!” she cried, shuddering.

He pressed yet closer, but she backed away and fanned herself as she neared the table. Still her hand held tight the paper.

Van Brugh followed her, his eyes burning with passion.

“Then I’ll have you—you. Later I’ll make you love me. Now choose. You marry me, or this man dies——” He was about to grasp her.

“I have chosen.” Quick as a flash her fan swept over the candles and blew them out. Save for the patch of moonlight, the room was in sudden darkness.

“By Heaven!” cried Van Brugh, “you shall pay for this;” and he groped with blind fury toward her.

As he did so there came a loud knock, and the door from the stairs that led down to the entrance of the house, was shaken vigorously.

“Open!” demanded an unmistakable voice. “Open, I say.”

“Help!” cried Renée. “M’sieur le Debonnaire, help me, I implore you.” The Hollander’s heavy hand was grasping her arm. She felt his breath hot in her face.

Debonnaire pounded on the door.

“Give me that paper,” said Van Brugh, tightening his hold till it tortured her.

“No, no—never—help!”

“I’ll force you,” he whispered hoarsely. “I will never give you up—now.”

“Help!” she cried loudly. “Help me!”

With a crash the door broke from its hinges. Debonnaire, flinging aside the portière, rushed upon Van Brugh with rapier drawn.

Van Brugh wheeled quickly in self-defense, drawing his own weapon.

“Fiend of hell!” he muttered, as their swords crossed.

Debonnaire laughed aloud.

“He’s come to send you there, my-heer.”

Slowly Van Brugh worked his way toward the door that gave on the stairs. Himself a master at fence, he contrived an impregnable guard. At last they were out of the moon’s rays. Renée could no longer follow the bewildering play of their weapons. It had ceased to be a dazzling sight. It was now a deadlier sound. Sybout was gradually working toward the staircase; slowly but surely he retreated, slowly and doggedly until at last, he contrived a quick upreach of his free hand, and, tearing the heavy portière from its pole, flung it, fold on fold, straight against the prying rapier.

In another instant he had vanished.

Disentangling himself from the portière, Debonnaire darted out, but already the banging of the door at the foot of the stairs told him that Sybout was safe in the open. Nevertheless he descended and tried the street door. It was locked on the outside. He shot the bolt within. Then ruefully he returned to Renée.

“Gone—and he’s locked the outer door. But we have a moment’s grace. I’ve bolted it inside.”

"What matters it, m'sieur? He failed to get them." She drew the document from the bosom of her dress and presented it to him. "Your credentials."

Debonnaire wondered. Taking the paper, he inspected it in the moonlight, then smiled with evident relief. The seal, praise fortune, was yet unbroken.

"My uncle must have found it," she said.

He gazed at her for a moment in silence while she stood there close to the glass doors, full in the silver light.

"And you imperiled your life," he said at last, "your life and—your honor to save this for me?"

She swayed slightly.

"Mademoiselle!" he said apprehensively, "you are hurt."

She turned again to him.

"No, no. But you must go—you must save yourself. He will surround the house. He will stop at nothing."

"Yes, perhaps, but there's time enough—"

"For what?"

He came close to her.

"There's time enough to leave together. Surely you would not have me go alone."

"Oh, m'sieur, how can it be? It seems impossible. We met but yesterday."

He shook his head.

"No, ages ago. Time holds no measure of such hours. Each moment's an eternity. I pray you come."

Her answer dismayed him.

"With whom?" she demanded faintly.

"With whom?" he repeated.

"I mean," she gently insisted, "your name?"

He bit his lip. "Is it not Louis le Debonnaire?"

"No, m'sieur, you know there is another."

"Yes, Louis le Sang-froid."

"And yet another?"

"Le Papillon de Feu."

She tossed her head impatiently.

"And even another?"

"Le Petit Chevalier du Monde."

She looked up at him.

"M'sieur, you mock me. Your family name?"

His brow darkened.

"Surely it is not a question of family?"

"No, you know it is not."

"What then? A woman's curiosity?"

"No, no; a woman's pride—the pride of a Cadillac."

"A pride, mademoiselle, that challenges mine. But is it not better, more divinely mad, to come away blindly—caring naught—thinking nothing of a name—loving as love the birds of heaven that have no name—free as the birds—and happy?"

"But whither?" she asked.

"To the North," he answered, drawing her to him.

A loud banging on the street door startled them.

"They're coming," whispered Renée. "They're coming. Oh, make haste—" She threw open the balcony doors. He stepped out and looked down, she trembling on the threshold.

"No," he said, "the height's too great."

"Now Heaven forgive me," she cried, in despair. "I've delayed too long. You are lost."

"In a better cause, mademoiselle, than I'd ever hoped to die for."

Drawing his rapier again, he crossed to where lay the torn portière and the door he had battered in. There he waited, looking down the stairway. And again she stood close at his side.

But before the guard below, led by Sybout and Roelof, had succeeded in breaking down the street door, suddenly on the balcony rail, the two heard a low scraping. They turned. Over the rail appeared the top of a ladder, and Pierre sprang into the room.

"At your service, my master," said he, with a bow and a grimace of pride at his achievement.

"Pierre!"

"Yes, m'sieur—Pierre le Coq, and now he's crowing. The horses you ordered, m'sieur, are still waiting."

"What? Speak—quick!"

"You commanded that three horses, m'sieur, should be ready on the main-

land. They are there. I have seen Gretchen. The ferry waits. She came all the way to the town to save you."

"*Dieu!*" exclaimed Debonnaire, "the horses. I'd forgotten them."

Pierre pointed to the balcony. "The whole town, m'sieur, is waking. The house will soon be surrounded."

"Go, m'sieur—quick—save yourself. Hear their clamor," pleaded Renée. "In a moment the door will break."

Debonnaire turned quickly to Pierre.

"Go you down," said he, motioning toward the balcony, "and stand by the ladder till the crowd appears. If I come not in time to escape, go then yourself and elude them. Take horse. Ride to Quebec. Inform his excellency, the governor, that he has a chance to quarrel with the Dutch. Tell them I lose not only the wager but my life. Tell them I take an eternal furlough."

Pierre wrung his hands.

"But, m'sieur—oh, m'sieur——"

"Assure his excellency," added Louis, "that Colonel de Salières in my behalf will present him with two thousand crowns."

"But, m'sieur," ventured Pierre, "I cannot leave you thus—I——"

"Go," said Debonnaire, sternly, "it is your captain who commands."

Pierre by force of habit drew himself up, then saluted, and, turning, descended the ladder.

Renée was again at Debonnaire's side.

"Your papers," she urged, "will they not save you?"

For answer he threw the document over the balcony to the ground.

"Pierre, take this paper with you." He turned with a smile to Renée. "Now my life is wholly in your keeping."

There came a crash below, a loud splintering, the blow of an ax, then a heavy stampeding on the stairs.

Debonnaire stood on the threshold of the balcony, his back to the light. Renée clung to him. They both gazed at the stairway door. The moment for guarding it had passed, and Debonnaire preferred his present stand. The moonlight behind him would shine on

their blades, but his own would work hidden by his shadow.

They rushed in—five of them—ten—a score.

He uttered a sharp call.

"Pierre—Pierre—come, boy, come!"

Van Brugh held his men in check.

"Monsieur," said he in a still rage, "release that lady. You are my prisoner."

Debonnaire smiled lightly.

"A statement," said he, "that demands a proving."

Pierre leaped over the rail and drew his weapon.

"Good!" said Debonnaire, "and now, mademoiselle, please keep to the balcony behind us."

Sybout swore in fury.

"At them!" he said, and the men closed in.

One on another the aggressors fell. Dutch to the last, they gave no sound. From Debonnaire and Pierre there came never a word—never a word till the end of it—when Syboult and Roelof, master and man, made ready to come at master and man for the final proving.

"Quick!" said Debonnaire, "quick, Pierre—the horses." He stepped back out on the balcony, and encircled Renée with an arm.

Pierre was sliding down the ladder. There was room for but one to attack. The two hung back in the room. The master or man must do it—Roelof or Syboult Van Brugh.

They conferred together in haste. And while they conferred, he waited. And while he waited he sang in the moonlight a catch of his far-famed song:

I am Louis le Debonnaire,  
Captain of Carignan-Salières,  
Lover of strife and devil-may-care,  
Lover of life—the world is fair,  
So sings Louis——

The song ended with a ring of steel.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Once more the Château St. Louis was in a festive mood.

By order of Daniel de Rémy the grim

old hall had been prepared for a banquet. Routed by the light of innumerable candles its deep shadows vanished, and the great blaze in the chimney place dispelled the gloom. The walls, usually so blank and sombre, were hung tonight with festoons and garlands of evergreen, dotted with holly—a forester's tapestry crudely woven.

Below in the town, the streets were deserted for inglenooks and tables laden with the Yuletide feast. Save when far through the evening silence the complice had called forth the worshipers, the deep-lying snow had been little trod; save where the lights of ships glimmered in the distance the river could not be seen. It was veiled by the falling snowflakes, large and lazy, that fluttered down. For several days, with the same fluttering motion, the flakes had been falling, falling, till Quebec seemed a phantom settlement, the white-shrouded ghost of a city, snowbound, spellbound, lost.

But at heart the town was aglow with cheer. To-day from the depths of the wilderness, wanderer after wanderer had come straggling home. Since morning the women and children had waited, had stood at the windows watching in silence, till at last their men had come. Deep-hearted wives and slender sweethearts—women of liberal laughter and girls of speaking eyes—at least for tonight they had husbands and lovers, men to be fed, cried over, laughed with, loved. By a hundred trails these men had come. Traders, sailors, runners, soldiers, one and all had their tales to tell.

In the banquet hall of the chateau sat the officers of Carignan-Salières—assembled for the governor's dinner. Their talk was indifferent and of trifling things. They were ill at ease, shy and aloof, like men with men; for not one of them but knew his neighbor's thought which was his own.

"Now a year ago," one of the lieutenants was carelessly remarking, "who could have foreseen this Christmas dinner in the new world?"

Capt. de Chamblay smiled dryly.  
"What extremes for the amiable regi-

ment of Carignan-Salières! Last year it was Christmas in a very different clime. Br-r-r! But Canada delights in frigid celebrations."

They nodded with forced ease.

"Do you remember in the land of the Turk," said another, "how warm it was that Christmas?"

"*Dieu!*" returned de Chamblay, "well do I remember. That was a very inferno—not only in the matter of temperature."

"Then I suppose Canada is cold enough to be called Heaven," said Varennes lightly, "and yet—"

"Heaven?" said one. "Then send me to hell immediately. Well, well, we'll have it warm soon enough. The Iroquois are like to make it hot for us."

"Speak not of the Indian devils," Varennes scowled; "I fear it is they who have taken our Louis le Debonnaire."

The officers stirred uneasily. All day they had been hard put to it for patience and self-restraint. Col. de Salières was pacing back and forth like a captive lion.

"Be still," he commanded, gloomily.  
"Talk is worse than futile."

De Chamblay frowned with downcast eyes.

"Tis positively tragic," he began.

Varennes smiled.

"What's tragic?"

De Chamblay glowered at him.

"Er—er—the cold!"

"Yes," said another. "What a dismal Christmas!"

"*Diable!*" exclaimed a third, surveying with disgust the banquet board. "I have no appetite for this repast."

"How strange! Does the weather so affect you?" Varennes faced them all in scorn. "Poor, frightened souls! Why not call things by their names and say right out that you fear Debonnaire is—"

"Silence!" said the colonel sternly.  
"A pest on you!"

Varennes shrugged.

"As you will, my colonel. But surely it makes matters even worse to seal our lips when he who was the very flower of the Carignan-Salières is missing. Oh, what a merry Christmas dinner!"

Thus led by the youngest they had just approached the subject, when Gov. de Rémy briskly entered the banquet hall.

"Welcome, gentlemen," said he graciously. "I'd like to greet you with a happy Christmas, but——"

The colonel frowned.

"Pray, don't, your excellency. Of course under the circumstances——"

"It would seem," concluded de Chamblly, "a travesty."

Varennes' lip curled.

"It is so very cold."

The colonel turned angrily on the dandy.

"Your jests, lieutenant, are most ill-timed."

Varennes made bold to demur.

"No more, my colonel, than is a discussion of the climate; I merely carry off the affair with a lightsome grace as Debonnaire himself would have us."

"Ay," said the colonel, nodding sadly. "It was ever his way."

The governor was glancing at the corner timepiece.

"Gentlemen, in ten minutes, it will be eight o'clock."

"On my soul," gasped the colonel in a whisper to De Chamblly. "He's thinking of the wager!"

"If in ten minutes——"

"Nay, nay," interposed the colonel, strongly moved by this cold calculation. "Say no more, I beseech your excellency."

De Rémy was calmly dignified.

"Merely as a matter of fact I would remark that there is a brief ten minutes in which Louis de Cadillac may—er—er——" He paused.

"In which," concluded Varennes, smiling vacuously, "he may prove that he's yet alive."

"Well, yes," said De Rémy, "that—and—er—in which he may claim the wager."

"We had quite forgot the bet, your excellency," returned De Chamblly in tacit rebuke.

"Yes," murmured Varennes, "it was so eclipsed by our discourse on the weather."

The colonel suppressed an oath.

"Out on this foolery!" He turned to De Rémy. "This boy makes light of the matter, but in truth we entertain the gravest fears for the captain's safety."

The Sieur de Courcelle inclined his head.

"I myself," said he, "begin to feel alarmed."

The colonel looked at De Rémy with dull resolve.

"Let us at once dispatch runners to the South. I must request that your excellency summon at once some *courreurs-des-bois* who knows the trails in that direction."

"Yes, yes, by all means," assented De Rémy, "if in seven minutes——"

"Five," corrected Varennes, coolly. The governor, visibly excited, looked at the clock. Only five short minutes remained. He had certainly won. In five short minutes he would be richer by two thousand crowns.

A sudden quick rap sounded on the main door, the knob was tried, the door opened, and Pierre le Coq, all but spent with fatigue, lurched forward, headlong and panting, into the banquet hall.

"His man!" exclaimed the governor, starting.

"Only Pierre!" said the little servant, breathing with difficulty. "Less than nobody," and he swayed as if on the verge of swooning.

"Speak," demanded the colonel, sharply.

They crowded around him.

"Dieu!" said Varennes, "he gasps like a fish on land. Give him air."

Pierre found his tongue.

"Air to a gasping fish? Nay, liquid." Varennes quickly filled him a glass.

"Speak!" repeated the colonel. "What of your master?"

"Yes, yes," cried De Rémy, "out with it, fellow."

Pierre gulped down the wine.

"Alas!" he managed to articulate. "My master was sentenced to be hanged."

"Hanged!" exclaimed the colonel, "nay, nay, not that!"

"Yes," said Le Coq, leaning for support against the table; "his credentials were lost—but he gained a parole—

came to the dwelling of ma'm'selle. I entered by the balcony above the garden. 'The house is surrounded,' said I. 'They will force an entrance. Come by the balcony. The ferry and horses wait.' But he lingered with ma'm'selle. She would not go—yet the soldiers were pounding on the door. 'Go alone,' said my master to me. 'Ride to the North. Tell the officers of the Carignan-Salières I take an eternal furlough.'"

Pierre paused breathless. He could hardly stand.

"No, no," said the colonel, "not that."

"The words," observed De Chambly, much moved, "of a true soldier."

The governor turned away.

"It is indeed terrible to think of," he said, "and I fear I am to blame."

"Nay," interposed Pierre. "Capt. le Debonnaire recovered the credentials you gave him."

"Found them?"

"Yes, but when ma'm'selle hung back, he threw away the paper."

"Threw it away!"

"Ah, *Dieu!*" exclaimed Varennes. "How like him! An eternal furlough!"

"Yes," pursued Pierre, with an evident effort of speech, "yes, but when the men broke in—twenty that seemed a hundred—he stood there and played with the lot—I beside him and ma'm'selle behind us on the balcony. Then came two—the last—their leaders. 'Now here are two geese,' said m'sieur, 'fit for a Christmas dinner. Behold them spitted.' He thrust—and thrust. The first fell—"

Pierre paused. He was swaying with fatigue. The story had taxed his strength.

"The first fell, but the second—my master's chief enemy—" Again Pierre broke off abruptly. He reeled in a fit of weakness, and swooned in a heap on the floor.

"In Heaven's name," cried the governor, "revive the fellow. We must know the end."

His excellency glanced at the clock.

"One minute," said Varennes, dryly, observing his look.

"Even if Debonnaire comes," declared

De Rémy, "the wager's mine. He threw away the paper. The sealed credentials cannot be produced—a condition, you remember?"

"I fear he will never come," said the colonel, brusquely. "If I may say so, the sum of two thousand crowns is my captain's blood money."

The governor flushed angrily.

But Pierre had opened his eyes. He raised himself to an elbow and fumbled at his breast.

"Pardon, your excellency, but—here's the paper. My master threw it to me!" Again he fell back exhausted.

The governor stared at the document now in his hand.

"I notice that the seal," said Varennes carelessly, "is still unbroken."

The hands of the clock in the corner pointed to eight. Their faces were strained; their silence tense and oppressive. The bell of the chapel on the hill had begun to strike the hour.

"It rings his knell," said De Chambly.

The governor shuddered.

"Gentlemen," he said, for the first time really moved, "I can but confess

— "Happy Christmas, your excellency," called a gay voice in the doorway. "Happy Christmas, my brothers!"

They turned.

There stood Louis le Debonnaire, and the face of the woman at his side, as it shone in the candlelight, was the face of the miniature come to life.

"Bravo! bravo!" cried Varennes. "I knew he would do it."

"My captain," said the colonel simply.

Pierre sat up against the table. His swoon had been somewhat exaggerated. Truth to tell, it had been Debonnaire's whim to keep the governor on tenterhooks of suspense until the very last moment.

"And under what name, mademoiselle?" asked his excellency, now grasping at the last straw as he bent to kiss her hand, "has this incomparable wooer won you?"

"To me he is Louis le Debonnaire," she replied simply.

"Only that?" asked De Rémy, crest-fallen.

"Nay," she allowed, "he has other names—Le Papillon de Feu, Louis le Sang-froid, le Petit Chevalier du Monde."

The governor bit his lip. But he, too, was a gentleman of the blood of France.

"Then, mademoiselle, as the father of the colony and so', as your father, too—will you permit me to settle upon you on your wedding a dowry of two thousand crowns?"

Debonnaire frowned with lofty displeasure, and in another moment would have spurned the gift. But the governor had gone to the head of the table. He raised his glass.

"To Louis de Cadillac," said he, with a pompous air; "and to his cousin, Mademoiselle Renée de Cadillac, who shall be madame to-morrow."

Renée started. She gazed wonder-struck at Louis. Then she had dreamed true. The idol of all her reveries was the idol of her love.

The officers held aloft their glasses. Varennes it was who approached the pair with a glass for each.

"To them both!" repeated his excellency, drinking.

Debonnaire responded with a wave of his glass, then touched it to the brim of hers.

"I drink," he murmured, "to the bride of Louis le Debonnaire!"



## THE WOOD PEEWEE

**H**E comes in the Springtime with the breeze  
That shakes the flowering maples,  
He builds his nest in greening trees  
Where shower and sunshine dapples;  
When all the woods are tranced and still,  
Amid the virgin leaves  
His pensive note he sounds at will,  
He grieves.

At dawning when the cool air floats,  
When dove-wing tints are streaming,  
He, earliest of the early throats,  
Begins his song adreaming;  
While round his nest still clings the night,  
He pipes in wistful flushes,  
But when the wind lets in the light,  
He hushes.

Yet is his heart with joyance filled  
And not with brooding sadness;  
If he might utter as he willed  
His strain would mount in gladness;  
It meaneth joy in simple trust,  
Though pensively it rings;  
Not as he would but as he must  
He sings.

DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT.

## MISS BURTON'S INTERFERENCE

By Sarah Guernsey Bradley

MISS BURTON was always honest—with herself.

This is really a far less common virtue than is popularly supposed, and the exercise of it is sometimes a weariness of the flesh.

To be honest with the big, careless, world is a comparatively easy matter, but to be honest with an examining, accusing, mocking self, has never yet been found to be a flowery bed of ease.

Miss Burton was introspective and analytical to a degree. She knew beyond a peradventure, why she did thus and so, and why she did *not* do so and thus, and though her particular form of honesty occasionally resulted in no little self-embarrassment, and some unflattering revelations, it had frequently carried her with flying colors over dangerous places, and, as she tersely expressed it, had kept her more times than once from making an everlasting fool of herself.

Consequently, when she had recovered from the surprise of Lollie Norris' invitation, she did not attempt to disguise to herself the fact that her chief reason for accepting lay in the thought that it would be something of a diversion along the lines of a fruit which was forbidden, to renew her old friendship with fascinating Jim Norris—careless, happy-go-lucky Jim, whose loves in the old days had been as the sands upon the shores of the sea, and whose marriage to little Lollie Davis—uninteresting to the verge of inanity—his subsequent apparent devotion to her, and his utter retirement from the haunts which had known him so well, had been a source of wonder to his friends that had outlasted the traditional nine days. Cynical souls said that Jim had made a mess of it all, but was too game to acknowledge

it—that *that* was the reason why club and grill room knew him no more.

"I confess," Miss Burton said, half aloud, "that the last time I saw Lollie she bored me to tears, but that's mere detail, most people do these days. Still, there must have been something about her or Jim—" she paused a moment. "I admit," she went on, reflectively, looking at herself steadily in the mirror, "that I have always been very fond of Jim, and that once upon a time, less than a thousand years ago, before this nasty little wrinkle was here, and this wicked gray hair *here*"—she gave a vicious pull at the offending lock that nestled comfortably among the coils of her wavy, black hair—"I admit that at one time, if Jim had liked me just the least little bit better than he did, I might have—" the girl in the mirror smiled back, understandingly, "but that was a long time ago," Miss Burton sighed, ever so lightly.

"I can't imagine why they have asked me up there. It will really be quite exciting to see Jim again; Jim, as an old, staid, married man! What with riding, and golf, and all that sort of thing, I guess Jim and I can contrive to lose Lollie for two or three hours each day!" Her eyes danced at the prospect. "Not that I have anything against Lollie, except that she's so deadly commonplace."

"Oh, is that you, Simpson?" to a gray-haired, motherly-looking woman, who had just entered the room. "I didn't hear you come in. Simpson, I have about made up my mind to go to the country for a week or so."

"Yes, miss." The well-trained servant manifested no surprise, although twenty-four hours earlier Miss Burton had announced that she was going to

Atlantic City for two weeks. She had taken care of Miss Burton, and of her mother before her, and she was used to the Burton vagaries. If Miss Burton had said that she was going to take a little trip to Mars, Simpson would have said, "Yes, miss," in precisely the same tone.

"To Mrs. Norris', you know, Simpson, in the really truly country."

"Yes, miss, 'twill do you good."

"Simpson, do you mean to say that I look as though I needed something to do me good?" Miss Burton hung upon the answer. No haggard, jaded-looking being was going to pay a visit to Jim's wife—not if the court knew itself, and it rather fancied that it did.

"No, Miss Lutie," Simpson raised her hands deprecatingly. "You're lookin' as fresh as a daisy—I wouldn't take you for more than eighteen!" Miss Burton swallowed this with a judicious grain of salt—Simpson's Hibernian strain asserted itself in this cheerful manner occasionally—but, in spite of herself, breathed more freely.

"I had thought of going to Atlantic City, Simpson, but I—I feel the need of a whiff of real country air, of something unconventional—you don't know what that means, Simpson——"

"No, miss," said the acquiescent Abigail.

"Something out of the common, something different. I'm tired and sick of all this society rot."

"Yes, miss. When will you go, miss?"

"To-morrow afternoon. We'll leave on the four o'clock train. Tell Mrs. Bixby she can go off to-morrow morning, and that I'll send for her as soon as I get home. Tell the servants that I'm going to close the house for ten days. And Simpson, be sure to stick in my trunk every decent rag I own; that's all now. Oh, Simpson," she cried, just as the door had closed behind the ancient handmaiden.

"Yes, miss." Simpson, as usual, was back on the spot.

"Be sure not to forget to put in my scarlet crêpe de chine." Miss Burton had suddenly remembered an old fond-

ness of Jim's for flaming scarlet, and she thought that that was a weapon not to be despised. "Besides," she said, meditatively, when the door had closed once more behind the faithful Simpson, "the Lord never helps those who don't do what they can to push their own games along."

"How good of you to come to meet me, Jim!" Miss Burton experienced a decidedly pleasurable little flutter about the heart, as she felt Jim's big hand close about hers in a grasp of welcome. Beyond a doubt there would be zest to this visit! She looked upon it as a direct gift of the gods that she had not outgrown such sensations. Oh, yes, they could contrive to lose Lollie for an hour or two out of the twenty-four; if not, why not? was what she thought. What she said was a shade more commonplace: "I'm so glad to see you again, Jim," but even that remark may be made quite telling with the proper inflection, and Miss Burton was past mistress in the art of inflection.

"Mighty glad to see you again, Lutie." Was there a lack in Jim's tone or did Miss Burton imagine it? "Hello, Simpson," Simpson beamed. Mr. Norris had always been a favorite of hers, and this recognition made a hero of him at once.

"You're looking awfully well, Lutie," he said, as he led the way to the carriage. There was nothing lacking in the tone this time. His eyes rested admiringly on the perfectly fitting cloth suit, and the soft, dark furs. This was distinctly gratifying. Jim, despite matrimony and country life, was able to sit up and take notice, and still knew a well-groomed woman when he saw one. Miss Burton's mercurial spirits soared.

"I'm fine, fine—this air is great! I shall be even finer before I leave!" She was in danger of bubbling over, but really it was too good, sitting there on the front seat by Jim, spinning along over the hard country road. Suddenly she remembered that it would be polite to make the regulation "health inquiries."

"Have you been well, Jim?" She looked at him as she said it, and for the first time she noticed that he was curiously pale, almost careworn, if Jim could look careworn.

"I—I haven't been very well for a week or so," he faltered.

"Nothing serious, I trust?" Miss Burton's voice was full of a light concern.

"No, I guess not," he laughed shortly. "I hope not," he muttered as he turned his head away from Miss Burton toward the western sky.

"Is Lollie well?"

"Pretty well, for her—you know she is not particularly strong."

"Oh, is that so?" Miss Burton began to wonder if she had come to a private hospital. Nursing was not exactly in her line, although she had once taken a course in First Aid to the Injured! Her spirits fell a little. The prospects for golf, cross-country runs, and woodland walks, did not seem as promising as they had the day before in New York.

"Lollie thought you'd cheer her up," said Jim, looking again toward the sunset.

"Give a man time, and he always lets the cat out of the bag! So that is the why of my invitation, eh?" laughed Miss Burton teasingly.

"Not altogether," Jim's tone might mean a great deal, or it might mean nothing. That was a way Jim had.

"Nothing like having a reputation for cheerful idiocy," Miss Burton laughed again.

"Are you really glad to see me, Jim?" she demanded suddenly.

"Can you doubt it?" said Jim, and his big, brown eyes looked the rest. "I can't tell you how I have looked forward to your coming." Miss Burton was almost startled by the fervor in his voice. Did one always return to one's first love? she wondered. Her heart beat happily. And ten minutes ago she had almost fancied his greeting half-hearted! "Let me see," she went on, smilingly, "there aren't any little Norrises, are there?"

Jim shook his head.

"You see I'm a bit rusty on the data

of the Norris family. You stopped writing to me, if you remember, as soon as your engagement was announced. I always considered that rather a scurvy trick." For four years Miss Burton had been treasuring this remark for Jim. Simpson on the back seat coughed discreetly.

"That was foolish of me, wasn't it?" said Jim abstractedly.

"Yes, I thought it was," snapped Miss Burton, "but naturally it wasn't up to me to write and tell you so."

"Let's not quarrel," there was a queer little catch in Jim's voice. Lutie Burton looked at him searchingly—beyond a doubt the dear old fellow was homesick for the days that were past and gone. She didn't know but what she was herself.

"What's the matter, Jim?" she asked very softly. And again she felt that pleasurable little flutter about the heart. It was all even better than she had expected.

"Matter? Why, nothing," he said, hurriedly. "How funny of you to think of such a thing!" Miss Burton hid her smile in her muff. Of course Jim would die game.

"You seem so-so-monosyllabic," explained Miss Burton lamely.

"To be candid, I'm a bit fagged, that's all. I—I'm afraid I've outgrown my old fondness for bickering, Lutie." No one had ever pronounced her name just as Jim did—Miss Burton's thoughts flew back a thousand years or less, and she looked upon it as a distinct benefaction that she had not gone to Atlantic City.

"Do you know Betty Ingalls, a distant cousin of Lollie's?" Jim put the question rather abruptly.

"Betty Ingalls—" reflected Miss Burton. "Yellow hair, blue eyes, wonderful color?"

"Yes, awfully pretty girl," the enthusiasm in his voice irritated Miss Burton, and she vaguely wondered why.

"I don't know her—I've seen her once or twice," she said icily.

"She's very young," Jim murmured. Miss Burton winced—she had ceased to care for birthdays.

"Very young," she echoed, in the tone of one who has named the unpardonable sin.

"Still, youth is a fault that is speedily outgrown," said Jim dreamily.

"But so tiresome while it lasts," complained Miss Burton.

"Lollie is very fond of Miss Ingalls—she is with us at present," said Jim briefly.

"Oh-h," Miss Burton was manifestly disappointed, several anticipations suffering a partial eclipse. Still, the youthful Betty might be useful in looking after the fond Lollie, while she and Jim were reviving old friendships, and building up new ones during those charming hours she proposed that they should spend in God's out-of-doors.

"We usually try to have *some one* with us." Finding nothing handy to say, Miss Burton said it.

"Lollie gets lonesome," explained Jim, after a rather awkward pause. And once again Miss Burton's heart fluttered pleasurabley, as she gave a sidelong glance at the handsome, broad-shouldered man who sat beside her.

A mess of it Jim had certainly made. One half hour at the Norris' convinced Miss Burton of this fact. No wonder the poor chap looked pale and almost careworn. Lollie was enough to rouse all the hatred, malice, and uncharitableness that had ever lodged in a human breast.

Always uninteresting, she had lapsed into the hideous boredom of fancied invalidism, and, plump as any little pouter-pigeon, befrilled and belaced from top to toe, she occupied the center of the stage—and incidentally, the most comfortable chair in the room—and in a plaintive minor key entertained her small audience with a detailed account of her various ills. It was her only stock in trade. No matter what was the subject under discussion, all conversational roads led, finally, to the Rome of Mrs. Norris' physical ills. She positively gloated over each and every twinge.

How Betty Ingalls, who, unlike herself had no counter-attraction in Jim, had stood Lollie for a month, was past Miss Burton's comprehension. Of course, Betty was very young, as Jim had said, and had probably not developed "nerves" as yet; still, Lollie was, apparently, beginning to pall on her, for she had not half the pretty color Miss Burton had remembered with admiring envy, and was listless and quiet to the verge of glumness. Once or twice she had been actually peevish to Miss Burton, but Miss Burton had accepted it philosophically, reflecting that one month of Lollie would be enough even to drive the Cherubim to open revolt.

For one full day, Miss Burton listened to Lollie's twenty times twice-told tale, and then, deciding that the Creator had designed her for better things, she cast her willing eyes Jim-ward, leaving pretty little Betty Ingalls to attend to Mrs. Norris' continuous clinic.

And when Miss Burton once made up her mind to cast her eyes in the direction of any one particular man, all kinds of things were liable to happen. The willingness—or otherwise—of the victim seemed to make small difference in the general result.

Jim fell into the toils with an ease which would have changed things considerably had it happened several years ago—the honest Miss Burton admitted that with a regretful little sigh. He seemed almost feverishly eager to be with her, and was constantly devising some scheme which should take them away from the others.

Lollie was a dead letter in the Norris economy, and despite Jim's well-remembered susceptibility to beauty, he scarcely went near little Betty Ingalls, who was certainly pretty enough to turn a much stronger head than Jim Norris could boast. It was all very flattering. During the day Jim and Miss Burton golfed and rode, and drove together, while Betty embroidered and Lollie discoursed on every "*itis*" she had ever heard of, and in the evening, Jim sang and Miss Burton played, while at the other end of the room, Betty, her head turned away most religiously from the musicians,

read aloud to the plump and yawning Lollie.

It was just the kind of a time for which Miss Burton had turned her back upon the fleshpots of her beloved New York, and she was vigorously qualifying for the Busy Bee Society. The strenuous way in which she improved each shining hour was a thing for drones to wonder at and admire.

Clearly she was giving dear, old, maimed Jim a treat. Several times she caught Miss Ingalls, who grew more quiet from day to day, looking at her curiously—accusingly, disapprovingly, Miss Burton thought, with a shrug of her shoulders. But then, Betty was very young. As Jim had said, she would be more tolerant of games as the years rolled on—she might even play a few herself, for it was not for nothing that she had been blessed with those long, blue eyes.

And then one night, notwithstanding the fact that she had dismissed them with such fine scorn, Miss Burton awakened to find herself worrying over Miss Ingalls' disapproving glances. From every corner of the room she seemed to see those wonderful, long, blue eyes looking at her in dumb accusation.

Perhaps she was carrying things a trifle too far. She did not fear for herself, but Jim was *only* a man—perhaps she ought to go home. She might be doing immeasurable harm in giving Jim a glimpse of a paradise from which he was forever barred by something far more terrible than an angel with a flaming sword. Conscience, with that activity born of sleepless hours, arraigned her mercilessly. She was nervous, and lonely with that "creepy" loneliness that comes when the rest of one's immediate world lies sleeping.

The house was as silent as a well-regulated grave. She would have given a day out of her life to have heard an "L" train whiz by. Her throat was dry and parched. The slipshod Norris servants never dreamed of leaving ice water in one's room. It was the worst-run house she had ever known—darn the country anyway! By the minute

her thirst increased, and she was too up-to-date a young woman to be willing to risk typhoid by an internal application of the water which stood in her "wash-pitcher." Ice water she *must* have. Simpson, who, ever since Miss Burton could remember, had slept in a room adjoining hers, was puffing the puff of an engine under full head, and Miss Burton had not the heart to "put on the brakes." There was nothing for it but a nocturnal pilgrimage to the dining room, even though she should encounter a whole phalanx of ghosts en route.

With a Litany-like "Good Lord deliver us from the country," she cautiously unlocked her door and tiptoed silently out into the gloomy hall, and down the stairs. Every time a board creaked, she felt her end approaching—Jim would never hesitate to shoot down a house-breaker. She had read of accidents of that sort. With the stillness of a shade she crept along.

She had reached the door of the dining room, when a long-drawn sigh, a low, pitiful moan came from the black, silent room across the hall. She stood still, petrified with fear. All the horrible, ghastly stories she had ever heard flashed across her mind in quick succession. She leaned heavily against the wall, powerless to move. Once again came that dreadful sigh. Flesh and blood she could cope with, but this—She was faint and weak with fear.

Hark! was she going crazy? Whose voice was that she heard? Whose was the sweet, almost childish voice that answered? She was in no danger of fainting now, though this was worse than a whole graveyard of ghosts.

To her dying day she should never forget that heartbroken, despairing voice.

"There's no use fighting against it, Betty; I've tried—I've prayed—I've kept away from you when my heart was breaking, breaking to be with you. God help me, it's no use!"

Oh, the horror, the infamy of it all! The hideous grotesqueness of the part she had played! She had an hysterical desire to laugh.

The blind, conceited fool she had been

not to have known that there *must* have been a reason for Jim's mad eagerness to be with her! An angry tear trickled down her cheek as she thought of her scarlet crêpe de chine.

And then— As the full import of their further conversation dawned upon Miss Burton, she bit her tongue to keep from crying out.

It could not be possible that they actually planned— And yet, she had the evidence of her own ears. She had come to the country in the confessed hope of finding the unconventional— She had found it with a vengeance, and the finding had staggered her.

She turned weakly, her thirst forgotten, stole down the hall, and crept silently up the stairs. Her mind was a medley of confused emotions. She had been in the presence of a passion that many read about, a few witness, and, fortunately, fewer still experience. It was absolutely beyond her comprehension. Her life had been singularly sheltered—she had known no great joy, no great grief. She had never been brought into contact with any emotion that was worth the sacrifice of even a tithe of the world's opinion.

Shivering as with the cold, she entered her room, and sitting down before her dressing table, tried to look at the situation from all sides. The white, haggard face that stared back at her from her mirror half frightened her.

"Poor old Jim," she said very softly, winking away a tear. "Oh, it's dreadful, dreadful! Yet if I were tied to a shrimp of a woman like that whining, irritating Lollie, I'd fasten a stone around her neck, throw her into the nearest pond, and forget to pull her out. That would be the easiest way. But this, oh, this is so much worse! Something *must* be done. Not that I care a flip of my fingers for that little fool of a Betty, but, but—I think I've always been rather fond of Jim—" The honest Miss Burton leaned her head on her dressing table, and her pretty shoulders shook a bit convulsively, "even," she looked up and smiled through her tears, "even if the scarlet crêpe de chine *didn't* have any effect."

For fully fifteen minutes she sat staring into space. Then jumping from her chair with the air of one who has come to a decision, she said, through shut teeth, "He *shan't* make even a greater mess of his life than he has already," and going into the adjoining room, with no gentle hand she shook the slumbering Simpson.

"Yes, miss," the ruling passion strong in sleep—which is the ultimate test—stood Simpson in good stead.

"Are you awake, Simpson?" demanded Miss Burton in the tones of an avenging angel, still shaking the ancient shoulders.

"Yes, miss," Simpson blinked like an old gray owl.

"I'm going home to-morrow morning, this morning, on the six o'clock train," she ground the words out savagely.

"Home!" gasped the now thoroughly awoken Simpson.

"That's what I said."

"But, miss, you've only just come!"

"Maria Simpson, this is the first time in your life that you've forgotten to mind your own business." Miss Burton had a cutting way when she chose.

"Yes, miss, and this is the first time you've ever had to call me Maria," the old woman actually whimpered—"I was only thinkin' how as the house is shut, and the servants is gone, and there are no food there—"

"There are hotels, Simpson," said Miss Burton grandly. "I'm obliged to go home. It is necessary that I should go to New York at once. The—the telegram came after you had gone to bed. We—we'll have to walk to the station," Miss Burton's tone was apologetic, for Simpson was as active as an agile hippopotamus, "but it's only about two miles," she added encouragingly. In spite of herself, Simpson groaned. This last Burton vagary was the final straw.

"I'll call you at three to pack, so get what sleep you can," and Miss Burton sailed out of the room.

When Miss Burton once made up her mind to do a thing, she did it even if the cloven-footed one himself stood in the way.

But it must be confessed that as she and poor old Simpson neared the station in the dim light of that November morning, tired, breakfastless, bedraggled, Miss Burton's iron will bent just the least bit in all the world, and she would have given a week out of her life to have been back in her comfortable bed.

This business had its drawbacks. She bought her tickets, and with an inward prayer that she had been the victim of some grotesque mistake, some wild hallucination, she walked through the doorway of the little station, followed by Simpson. Then for an instant it seemed to her that her heart stood perfectly still. There, at the farther end of the platform, their backs turned to her, stood the two people in all the world she had prayed she might not see, the two people in all the world she had known that she *would* see—Jim and Betty.

For one moment it seemed to Miss Burton that she could not go on with her part of the program. She experienced a sort of stage fright. A childish impulse to turn and run away was strong upon her. But Jim, dear old Jim—she blinked rapidly and swallowed hard, Jim *must* not make a bigger mess of things than he had already. The thought acted like a tonic, and turning to Simpson, she said in her finest "society" tone:

"Ah, there are Miss Ingalls and Mr. Norris—Miss Ingalls is evidently going up to town to-day also—how very fortunate!" She did not add for whom, but holding her head very high, walked down the platform.

"Really, very good-looking shoulders you two have," she called out gayly, and her heart swelled with pride as she heard her own voice.

They turned quickly like two guilty children, and Miss Burton saw rather than heard Jim's muttered "Damn." But over Betty's pale little face swept such a look of relief, that the angels of heaven must have sung aloud in joy.

"I always *was* fond of shoulders," Miss Burton rattled on; "give me a good pair of shoulders, and the rest is mere detail. Shopping expedition, Miss In-

galls?" She gave her no time to answer. "The shops are so attractive now—perfectly bewildering when I left town. Such furs, such laces! So glad we're going up together! I received a wire late last night calling me to New York." Miss Burton had once lied her way through the custom house, and she felt equal to anything.

"Sorry to have to leave so unceremoniously, Jim, but I didn't want to annoy you people last night by letting you know," which were the truest words Miss Burton had ever spoken. "Then, besides, I do so love an early morning walk"—here she had a short session with the recording angel—"gives one such a glorious appetite! I'm as hungry as a bear this very moment. We'll have a little breakfast together at the Holland, Miss Ingalls. That will be jolly."

"Thanks," murmured Betty in the tone of one who would never eat again.

"Sorry you're not going, too, Jim. Oh, isn't that our train?" The sweetest music Miss Burton had ever heard was that long, shrill whistle. "On time for once, that's a comfort! I do so hate to wait for a train. You lead the way, Jim." It was not part of Miss Burton's program to close an eye to any last fond interviews. "No, you get in first, Miss Ingalls; beauty first always! Get a good seat, on the river side. One for Simpson, too, if you will. Good-by, Jim," Miss Burton effectually blocked the way by standing on the last step of the car, "sorry to go off in such a rush, but you understand, circumstances and so forth. I left a note for Lollie; good-by." She could scarcely see Jim through the sudden mist that came before her eyes. "Good-by," and the train rolled on toward New York.

"I don't see why Lutie and Betty don't come down," Mrs. Norris whined about three hours later, looking across the breakfast table at as much of Norris as was visible to the naked eye from behind his newspaper.

"They *are* late," temporized Norris. For three long, sickening hours in which he had lived ten years, he had been

vainly trying to frame some excuse for Betty's departure.

"Late! I should think they were!" snapped Mrs. Norris. "It gets on my nerves so when people aren't on time. What on earth"—she picked up a small, blue envelope, which lay on top of her slim pile of mail, and looked at it wonderingly—"is Lutie writing to me for? Well, I don't see why it was necessary for *her* to go," Mrs. Norris burst forth a moment later; "she knows how little it takes to upset me!"

"What's the matter?" came in muffled tones from behind his paper.

"Matter? Listen to this—'Dear Lollie: After you had gone to bed, a telegram came calling Miss Ingalls home immediately—'" the paper fluttered to the floor, and Jim, his eyes almost starting from their sockets, stared, as if fascinated, at the slip of paper in his wife's hand—"on account of the serious illness of her mother!'"

"My God," muttered Jim.

"What did you say?" Mrs. Norris was impatient at the interruption.

"Too bad," said Jim briefly, as he leaned over and picked up his newspaper.

"I don't think she ought to go alone on that early morning train, she is so very young, so I am going up to town with her,'" Jim's face was a study. His brain reeled. So many things were clear to him, so many were, and everlastingly *would* be, insoluble mysteries.

"Many thanks for a delightful visit. I have learned so many interesting things about the country. My good-bys to Jim. Tell him to take care of himself—he needs a tonic. Affectionately ever, LOUISA KIMBALL BURTON."

"She's the most thoughtless woman I've ever known. She *knew* this would give me a headache. The idea of both of them leaving me at once! Jim, you're not eating a thing. If you'd only take a walk before breakfast as father used to, you *might* have some appetite."

Behind the bulwark of his newspaper, Jim Norris smiled grimly.

"Of course Betty *had* to go. But Lutie knows how little it takes to bring on one of my awful headaches. Not that I shall *miss* her. She's grown terribly stupid, anyway—I think she's growing old," said Mrs. Norris, viciously, "and the way she threw herself at your head was perfectly disgusting. Betty is much more attractive."

Jim caught his breath sharply, but Mrs. Norris was too absorbed in her grievances to notice it.

"I guess Lutie had her own reasons for going up to New York," Mrs. Norris sneered; "Betty was a convenient excuse. She can't fool me. I'm glad she has gone."

"I think I am, too," said Jim Norris, very slowly, gazing steadily into the depths of his second cup of coffee.

Then he disappeared once more behind the pages of his paper.



## A BARGAIN

SHE made the best of bargains certainly.  
He gave—why everything that wealth may bring,  
Position, prestige and a pedigree,  
And she—she only gave a trifling thing.

What wonder that we called the bargain good;  
So small the price for all her hand might take.  
Gladly she gave, as any woman would,  
A foolish, little heart for him to break.

THEODOSIA GARRISON.

## WHEN SHE SANG

By W. D. Nesbit

SHE sang a song extremely sad,  
And everybody wept;  
No tone or accent gay or glad  
Into her singing crept;  
Nobody understood just what  
Occasioned all the gloom—  
These are the sentences, woe-fraught,  
That floated through the room:

*Tizzy-la-ha-ha-has tro zuv summah  
Le-he-hef flu-u-u minga lo.  
Allerluv-huv-huv lickum panyo  
Ah-hah-ha fay-ay-ay-ay dedden go.*

It may have been a foreign tongue—  
The tones were soft and sweet—  
But there was none the crowd among  
That could the song repeat.  
And, O, her voice was tremulous,  
And quavery and low  
When dulcetly she sang to us  
The words that grieved us so:

*No ho flow-ow-ow zuver kin dred  
No ho ro-ho-hose bodys nigh  
To re see-cc-ee-ee verlass plushis  
O haw-haw he-ec-ee crass i!*

I bowed my head upon my hands—  
A strong man, too, am I—  
Yet every true heart understands  
The tears would come, and why.  
Here was a lady, passing fair,  
Of nature kind and good,  
Who told of suffering, somewhere,  
And no one understood.

*Tizzy la-ha—— Ah, how tender  
Were the words she dwelt upon!  
And the luh-huv lickum panyo  
That was fay-ay dedden gone!*

# THE REPORT FROM MAXIM'S

By Mary B. Mullett

"**B**UT, Aunt Julia!" began Larrabee.

"My dear Philip," interrupted his sometimes august relative, in her most oracular tones; "I am here as a delegate to the woman's congress. When I accepted the appointment, I stated to the ladies of our club that I should not confine myself to attending the sessions of the congress. I told them that I proposed to make a study of social conditions as they exist here in Paris, and that, on my return, I should be prepared to report upon those conditions."

"But, Aunt Julia——"

"Now, Phil," said his aunt, dropping to a conversational tone, "tell me one thing. Isn't this Maxim place what people call typically Parisian? Just tell me that."

"Oh, in one way. But, Aunt Julia——"

"Precisely. In one way. And that way happens to be the one I want to study."

"But, Aunt Julia——"

"There, there! Don't worry about your old aunt. I wasn't born yesterday, Philip. I'm an old woman. Oh, yes, I am! And fat. If I were lean and Bernhardt I might have to steel myself against the wiles of your scandalous Frenchmen. But sixty! *And* fat! No, Philip; you won't have to protect me with your life."

"But, Aunt Julia——"

"Now, look here, Phil!" getting up and going to the door of her bedroom. "It's all right, and very delicate of you, no doubt, and all that, to try to protect my young morals; but I more than half suspect you might do better

to expend your apparently abundant energy in looking after your own ethical health—as our chairman of philanthropy so ably puts it."

Aunt Julia was becoming oracular once more, but she recovered herself as Larrabee opened his mouth with the evident intention of exploding another "But, Aunt Julia."

"Philip," she remarked, firmly, "I am going—to Maxim's—to-night. And you—are going—to take me. Is that clear?"

Larrabee made a gesture of mingled despair and resignation. Then his eye brightened.

"All right, Aunt Julia. If you will go, I suppose there's no use arguing. I'll come for you at seven o'clock."

The smile deserted his aunt's face as she turned upon him. Then her eyes twinkled.

"That was very clever of you, Phil," she said. "Are you quite sure you ought to try to be an architect? I've heard that there's a dearth of really good diplomats in our country. I should say that you could ameliorate the diplomatic drought very decidedly."

She chuckled behind her double chin, as Larrabee blushed.

"Very clever of you," she went on. "Only—I happened to hear you tell Judge Garnett the other day not to fancy he was 'seeing Maxim's' at any hour before midnight. Now, you do understand. To-night, then. And," rather wistfully, "be a good boy—if you can—in this great, wicked city."

"Dear old Aunt Julia," Larrabee said to himself, as he turned from the closed bedroom door and went downstairs. "Be a good boy." And take her to

Maxim's! Sounds like a contradiction in terms. If the confounded place would only burn down before night! But it won't. Nothing ever burns in Paris. Nothing except money. If I hadn't burned such a lot of Aunt Julia's—and didn't hope to burn a little more now and then, I suppose I might refuse to gratify such an outlandish whim. As it is—"

The young man thoughtfully chinked the coins in his pocket and sighed.

After helping his aunt into the *facre* that night, Larrabee stood with his foot on the step, desperately clinging to a forlorn shred of hope that something would happen to rout the expedition.

However, nothing did happen, except that the driver looked inquiringly over his shoulder; whereupon, "*Chez Maxim!*" mumbled Larrabee, and threw himself into the corner beside his aunt.

"*Pardon!*"

The driver shot it at them with a force which seemed fairly to twist him around on his high seat.

"*Chez Maxim!*" snapped Larrabee.

The driver's glance involuntarily traveled to the ample form of Aunt Julia, rested upon her white hair, met for an instant the benevolent beam of her eyes regarding him through her glasses. Then he shrugged his shoulders ever so slightly.

"*Chez Maxim,*" he replied, in a resigned tone, and started down the avenue.

It was a crisp October evening, and Aunt Julia drew her boa snugly up over her ample shoulders. But Larrabee felt no chill! On the contrary, as the cab crossed the Place de la Concorde, starry with lights, and he realized that only a turn of the corner lay between him and their destination, the perspiration seemed to steal from every pore. He stared morosely down the arcades of the Rue de Rivoli, wistfully thinking of those proper-minded female relatives who are satisfied there to roam by day and, at night, worn by much bargaining, to go discreetly and early to bed. Why couldn't Aunt Julia have been con-

tent to concern herself with lace berths instead of taking this inconvenient interest in social conditions.

Then, of a sudden, Larrabee's impatience vanished; for in elaborately drawing up to the curbstone, the driver had tossed, as it were, a wink and a shrug to a passing brother of the whip, and Larrabee had seen him do it. A sudden wave of loyalty went through him. The devil take them all, anyway! If Aunt Julia wanted to see Maxim's, Maxim's she should see—bless her heart!—and if anybody dared to think that it was anybody's affair but his—Larrabee's—he would—

Then he sighed. He had not been three years at the *Beaux Arts* for nothing. He had learned to count on a trait of the Parisian character; a trait which is eminently lovable when you have learned how to deal with it, but which is pretty nearly akin to a child's delight in mischievous teasing. It is not mean in intention, and is not, from the Parisian's own point of view, coarse in expression. It is the spirit which makes a ring of students dance hand in hand around some spectacled English matron, when they find her, solemnly incongruous, in the whirl of the carnival crowds. One smile from her, if it be a smile of good-fellowship, and the touch of malice in the teasing is gone. In fact, the teasing itself promptly ceases. But the more solemn the matron grows, especially if her solemnity takes on resentment, the more persistently and merrily dance the students, isolating her so that everybody may see this choice bit of humor which they have discovered in the midst of the hurly-burly.

It was some such contingency which Larrabee most feared. He did not particularly relish the idea of having Aunt Julia see Maxim's, but it was with still less enjoyment that he calculated the possible results of Maxim's seeing Aunt Julia. Miserably he realized that her presence would be extremely likely to strike Maxim's as humorous. This would be bad enough. If, in addition, her visit should be attributed to motives of morbid and coldly superior curiosity, as was highly probable, there was every

prospect of some sort of an explosion, in which Aunt Julia would come in for a good deal of a shaking up.

While Larrabee's mind thus flashed for the hundredth time over the possibilities of the situation, the cab stopped, and he stepped out.

In front of the café the usual group of little tables, attended by spidery chairs, occupied two-thirds of the walk; but at this hour, at Maxim's, they were deserted. Only one man sat back against the wall, nervously drumming his fingers on the empty table. As the cab approached he started up and came forward, then stopped and half raised his hat in apology. Larrabee made a mechanical gesture toward his own hat; then, with an exclamation of surprise and an unconsciously French "pardon!" to Aunt Julia, stepped back to the man among the tables.

"Monsieur Thiebaud!" he exclaimed. "Ah!" with polite hesitation. Then as Larrabee came closer: "Ah, c'est Monsieur Larraby! Bon soir, bon soir! Comment ça va? So! And it is at Maxim's that you study the architecture, hein? Ah, youth—youth!" and Thiebaud sighed a little as he ran his fingers through his gray hair. "Come, you must present me to your friend. Ah, but I insist. I was young myself once; and always will be for that matter," he added, with a little laugh, as he drew Larrabee toward the cab. "My dear mademoiselle," he began, addressing Aunt Julia's dim figure, "this *bon garçon* of yours—um—er—pardon, madame! A thousand times pardon! I assure you——"

But Larrabee almost impatiently pulled him back.

"It is my aunt," he explained in rapid French.

Thiebaud lifted his eyebrows to a phenomenal height.

"And I am taking her to Maxim's."

"But—my boy, what are you thinking about! One doesn't take one's aunt to Maxim's."

"No," acquiesced Larrabee, "in theory, one doesn't."

"Oh, you Americans!" exclaimed Thiebaud. "When a woman of your

family says 'come,' you come. And when she says 'go,' you go."

"Well," retorted Larrabee, "it's the same with you if the woman *doesn't* happen to be of your family. But," with a gesture, "you don't understand. My aunt is not only my aunt; she is also my banker. You comprehend? I couldn't refuse her if I would. And she wouldn't be refused if I could," he added.

"Ah, now I see!" laughed Monsieur Thiebaud. "Madame is more than an aunt. She is a power."

"On the contrary," said Larrabee, a little stiffly, "she is more than a power. She is my aunt."

Thiebaud looked keenly into the young man's face a moment, then nodded approvingly.

"Very well put, my boy. Well, I hope nothing unpleasant—oh, I'm sure *ces bons gens* in there will comprehend. Explain to madame that it is only good spirits—and youth—and—" he ended somewhat faintly.

The two men regarded each other with speculative eyes. Then, after a moment's tugging at his white mustache, Thiebaud suddenly clutched Larrabee's arm.

"Wait!" he said. And again, "wait!"

Larrabee waited. He was pathetically willing to keep on waiting. Thiebaud reflected while one might have counted twenty, then sharply nodded his head, as if to his own thoughts.

"I believe I can fix it for you," he said. "Just give me two minutes. Hold on. I was waiting for some friends when you came. Tell madame that I asked you to watch for them while I went inside for a moment. It is understood? Good!" and he hurried into the café, leaving Larrabee puzzled, but relieved.

"I beg your pardon for keeping you waiting, Aunt Julia," he said, going back to the cab. "That was Thiebaud; one of the big men over at the *Beaux Arts* and the one I wrote you about—the one who was so good to me at the time of the *concours* last year. You remember? He asked me to watch here a moment for some friends he is ex-

peeting. He won't be gone more than a minute or two and I know you wouldn't mind, it being Thiebaud and his having been so good to me."

Aunt Julia good-naturedly signified her willingness to do a good turn for Thiebaud, and Larrabee went on.

"By the way, Aunt Julia, you mustn't misunderstand if they—carry on pretty lively to-night. They don't mean any harm. It's just good spirits—and youth—and—" like Thiebaud, he ended rather faintly.

"Oh," said Aunt Julia, smiling, "I'll make allowances. I don't think it's going to be a Sorosis breakfast," she chuckled, "but neither do I insist upon its being a Roman orgy. I don't believe that the world is half as bad as it's painted, anyway."

"You see," urged Larrabee, eagerly, "at home, people—er—carry on at sleigh rides and—and oyster suppers, but—but draw the line at restaurants. You know how it is. Well, over here, they don't. That's all. Don't draw the line at restaurants, I mean. You just imagine you're at a—a straw ride, Aunt Julia, and it won't seem—peculiar, at all."

Larrabee felt that he had stumbled upon a happy preparation for Aunt Julia's evening and he rambled feverishly on, conscious, nevertheless, of several recurring anxieties. If that beast of a Laurier *should* be there and should pursue his unpleasant habit of planking down a louis for a kiss! And if Lucie de Neuilly *should* dance on the tables! And if they *should* guy Aunt Julia!

Decidedly Larrabee was not happy.

He was still doing his best to prepare Aunt Julia for a somewhat exuberant but, after all, really guileless evening when Monsieur Thiebaud reappeared.

"It is arranged," he said in an undertone to Larrabee. "Present me."

Larrabee introduced him; and Monsieur Thiebaud, with a degree of dignity, surpassed only by Aunt Julia's, assisted that lady to alight. He declared that he had quite given up the friends he had been expecting and that, with madame's permission, he would wait no

longer. Whereupon, paternally waving Larrabee into the background, Thiebaud offered his arm to Aunt Julia, and the two made their stately entrance into that famous restaurant where a certain Parisian deity, masquerading under the name "L'Amour," has held some extraordinary revels.

In the café, through which one passes to reach the supper room, there was a sprinkling of loungers, ruminant over tall, slender glasses of black coffee, or clashing arguments over a "*rogue Americain*." Larrabee, stalking along with a watchful eye out to right and to left, saw that he went not unaccompanied in the wake of Aunt Julia and Thiebaud. No sooner had they swept grandly by than a smile flashed along the faces behind them, so that to Larrabee's nervous apprehension a palpable little wave of amusement seemed to run abreast of him as he went down the room. At the farther end of the place Thiebaud stopped abruptly, transferred Aunt Julia to Larrabee—to that young man's pitiable, though inward dismay—and held a brief conference with the man intrenched behind the desk.

"It is that we must warn those who come later," he murmured to Larrabee as he rejoined them. "*Celui-la*, he will be our *avant-poste*."

There was no time to speculate on Thiebaud's meaning, for in another moment they had crossed the threshold of the supper room and were slowly making their way among the close-set tables. As this part of the restaurant was rather claimed by the *habitués* of the place, Larrabee had imagined that Thiebaud meant to seclude Aunt Julia at the extreme end of the large raised alcove, to which interloping strangers were generally relegated. He very soon discovered, however, that this friend in need had other plans. Gravely bowing to one group after another, Thiebaud led the way to a corner table which, as Larrabee shrewdly suspected, had been hurriedly vacated that Aunt Julia might have a good place.

"Yes, *madame*," Thiebaud was saying as he took his seat beside her; "Paris loves the Americans. Perhaps it is be-

cause it is only the Americans—and the Russians—who comprehend the Parisian."

Thiebaud enunciated this delicate bit of flattery slowly, and Aunt Julia, looking up at him with her kind, motherly face aglow with responsive friendliness, was so intent upon comprehending this particular Parisian that she was, as yet, scarcely conscious that she had actually invaded Maxim's.

Larrabee, covertly watching her, felt again the catch at his throat as his heart warmed with that sudden tender care of her. Dear old Aunt Julia! With quick defiance he eyed the clustered groups of faces and clinched his hands as he saw that Laurier was there and that Lucie de Neuilly was leaning forward, her elbows on the table, her chin in the V of her hands, her eyes looking out from under the half-shut lids. Glancing toward the raised alcove, Larrabee saw the craning of necks of people leaned forward to catch a glimpse of Aunt Julia, herself blandly unconscious of the change which her coming had cast over the spirit of Maxim's.

Suddenly the young man realized that Thiebaud must have announced their arrival and have made a personal plea for discretion. Knowing the *bon camaraderie* of the place and seeing the almost ludicrously respectful expression into which most of the countenances had been carefully composed, Larrabee perceived that this was a voluntarily chastened Maxim's, and he dared to hope for the best.

"By George!" he said to himself; "Aunt Julia's fate is in her own hands. If she hits it off all right, they'll be simply seraphic!" And he transferred his attention to his own table, knowing that, if trouble was to come, the storm center would be there.

Thiebaud, after keeping Aunt Julia occupied by a deferential consultation of her wishes, had ordered the supper and now he resumed his carefully enunciated phrases. His voice carried so well that, as Larrabee perceived Thiebaud intended it should, it reached the ears of almost everybody in the place.

"Yes, we Frenchmen have always

been partial to the Americans—there was Lafayette, you remember—and the partiality survives to this day; is it not so, Ducroix?"

The man to whom the question was addressed and who sat at a neighboring table assented with a courteous inclination of the head. Aunt Julia's benevolent gaze rested approvingly on the ribbon of the *Legion d'Honneur*, a tiny red fleck upon his coat.

"Distinguished himself as a civil officer in Algeria, Ducroix did," Larrabee announced, somewhat unctuously, in an undertone to Aunt Julia. A hasty "Really!" was all she vouchsafed in reply, for Ducroix was speaking and she leaned forward to catch his words.

"Yes," said Ducroix, "the Americans have been our comrades on the field of battle and, in the realm of commerce, rivals by whom it is almost an honor to be vanquished."

The speech was a bit too complicated and too rapid for Aunt Julia, who had no more than figured out the first phrase when Ducroix arrived at his perorative bow. Not to be outdone in politeness, however, she gave in acknowledgment a bow of her own; replica of the one with which she always recognized the applause when, at the annual dinner of the Woman's Club, she was toasted as:

"OUR HONORED PRESIDENT.  
"A perfect woman, nobly planned  
To warn, to comfort and command."

It was a charming bow, but this time there was a hesitating quality about it, due to Aunt Julia's wondering just what the gentleman had said and whether an acquiescent "*Oui, oui!*" would fit the situation or not. Before she had time to hazard it, the woman sitting beside Ducroix leaned forward with a little laugh. Larrabee recognized her as Mlle. Grasset, recently engaged at the *Odéon*. She had the beautifully articulated speech of the best stage in the world; a French which is like nothing so much as exquisitely chiseled reliefs in marble.

"I was once in the United States," she said, "in the company of Mme. Sarah Bernhardt. *Mon Dieu*, but every-

thing is *en grand* with you. When I first came back, I had the so big eyes I was obliged to go seek a magnifying glass to find my little lodging!"

Everybody laughed at this. Even Aunt Julia caught the point, so carefully had "*la Grasset*" led her along from phrase to phrase, separating them by pauses devoted to gestures which were elucidation itself, or to a *moue* which needed no words. Larrabee felt a thrill of admiration.

"There's no use talking," he said to himself. "When these people want to be gracious, seraphic is too crude a word to apply to the result."

Before the laughter over "*la Grasset's*" tribute had subsided there was a stir at the entrance from the café and half a dozen new arrivals came in; the air of bated breath, with which they looked about, announcing unmistakably that Thiebaud's *avant-poste* had carried out his instructions. While the newcomers were finding tables a shining bald head was timidly projected through the doorway followed by a heavy black beard which gave the impression that the head had been accidentally set upside down upon the bulky shoulders. Thiebaud at once sprang up and went forward.

"Upon my word, Aunt Julia!" exclaimed Larrabee in a voice of repressed excitement. "That's Maubert, the sculptor. You must have your rabbit's foot with you to-night; though now that Thiebaud's friends have come, I'm afraid you'll have to worry along in my poor society."

The expected friends had indeed come, but Larrabee was wrong in his prediction. After presenting his new guests to Aunt Julia, Thiebaud found places for them alongside of him, and promptly returned to his previous tactics.

"We were speaking of America," said he, and his glance at Maubert caused Larrabee to chuckle inwardly, so plainly did it say:

"It's up to you now to tickle America under the chin. You will please do so immediately, *no matter what your private sentiments may be!*"

Maubert hurriedly complied.

"Ah, America!" he exclaimed. He waved his hand in a way which seemed to imply volumes, but his tongue was less eloquent. Though the fervor of his tone increased, all he said was: "Ah, America!"

"He's sparring for wind," said Larrabee to himself.

"He'd say that American women have the measurements of the Venus of Milo if Aunt Julia's own measurements were not so aggressively visible to the naked eye. There! he's going to say 'Ah, America!' again if somebody doesn't come to the rescue."

But somebody did come.

"Madame is then an American?"

It was Lucie de Neuilly who lifted her chin and her eyelids and asked the question, with a gentle deference at which Larrabee marveled.

"Oui, mademoiselle," said Aunt Julia, a pretty flush taking possession of her cheeks at her temerity in attempting French before all these people. "Je suis —Americaine—mais—je trouve Paris —charmant!"

She finished quite breathless from the magnitude of the effort, but her eyes shone with open delight as Lucie led a hearty round of applause. Then everybody talked at once.

"But—isn't she adorable!"

"She's just like a child."

"Not at all! She's quite the great lady—but *with a charm!*"

Larrabee's heart felt as if some one had stopped standing on it. He breathed again. Then Thiebaud signed for silence, and got up with the air of a man pleased with himself and all the world.

"I propose a toast," he said. "To our friends, the Americans!"

Aunt Julia's eyes were fixed on Thiebaud's face—and that was most fortunate. Otherwise she might have seen Laurier enthusiastically print a kiss upon his companion's cheek, and then clap his hand over his mouth in evident contrition and dismay. He looked so ludicrously downcast and apologetic that Larrabee, who had witnessed the

episode, laughed outright and then tried to cover the laugh by singing a line of "The Star Spangled Banner." He broke off, however, as everybody near him, with the exception of Aunt Julia, regarded him with deep reproach, as if to remind him that unseemly hilarity was not to be indulged in.

"It's our national hymn," Larrabee hastened to explain. And then Aunt Julia, with a sudden moisture in her eyes, turned back her wrap and revealed a diminutive Stars-and-Stripes pinned among the laces of her gown.

How was it, Larrabee afterward asked himself, that the slow-moving, heavy-lidded eyes of Lucie de Neuilly were the first to recognize the bit of silk which rose and fell now, much faster surely than was its wont, there on Aunt Julia's patriotic breast. At any rate Lucie was the first to know the flag and, with a swift straightening of her sinuous body, she sprang to her feet.

"*Au drapeau de nos amis!*" she cried, saluting.

"*Au drapeau!*" rang through the room as everybody followed her example.

Aunt Julia, suddenly comprehending what they were doing, put up a trembling hand to hide her trembling lips, and took off her glasses to wipe her eyes—which may have been the reason she missed a pirouette by Lucie; though, to be sure, it was quickly suppressed.

When the glasses and the eyes had been cleared of mist, Aunt Julia in her turn made a gesture requesting silence, and Larrabee felt again that thrill of protecting loyalty as he saw that the hand with which she tried to steady herself against the table was itself trembling. He was conscious of a qualm at the thought of Aunt Julia's French, but he determined hotly to slay the man or the woman who should dare to laugh, no matter what the temptation might be. He was wasting his fierceness. Every face was turned toward Aunt Julia, but it was with that abandonment to an honest and kindly interest, the possibility of which seems almost always to lie somewhere in the French character;

though, to be sure, it frequently seems to sleep soundly where it lies.

The verbs in Aunt Julia's little speech were all out of order and, as for the genders and the pronouns, they were, as Larrabee afterward fervently declared, "all that they might have been, and more!" But never did international oratory achieve a more pronounced success. If the speaker was at first inclined toward the oracular manner which was the accepted standard of the Woman's Club, it was only for a moment. One cannot be oracular and do lightning calculations in grammar at the same time. So, after the formal opening, Aunt Julia's manner was a delicious mixture of timidity, winning friendliness and humorous appreciation of her remarkable effects along the line of language. Larrabee subsequently reproduced these effects as they would have seemed had the languages been reversed. The following was his rendering of the famous speech:

"'Ladeez and zhentlemen! I sink in the middle of my friends.'"

"That means," Larrabee would explain; "I think I am in the midst of friends." And you bet she was!"

Then he would resume: "I sank you—wiz all my hearts. I haf am came—to Paris—for two raisins. Ze one raisin—are zat my head—ees plumb full—of Frenchmen."

A protest of incredulity being offered at this startling statement, Larrabee, while insisting that he was reporting Aunt Julia with absolute correctness, would explain that she really meant to say that her mind was much occupied with French affairs.

"'I am found,'" he would proceed, in rendering Aunt Julia's broken French into similarly shattered English—"I am found—ze gret appleness here at Paris. I am found again—ze opportunity—to take ze lessone—in how ze Frenchmans levee. How levee—on ze public; how levee—on your family; how levee—in Maxim's!" And here," said Larrabee, "Aunt Julia smiled a smile of triumphant friendliness."

Her naïve translation of a wish to study social conditions into a desire to

learn how to act at Maxim's came very near upsetting the company, but if there was any inadvertent laughter it was drowned in loud applause led by Thiebaud and Lucie. When this had subsided Aunt Julia concluded, very prettily in manner, though the verbs grew more and more tangled, by toasting France, and calling for the *Marseillaise*.

As everybody rose to the toast Lucie looked wistfully at the table top, but allowed herself to go no higher than the upholstered bench along the wall, whence she directed the singing, while Larabee—hugely relieved—joined Laurier in leading an impromptu orchestra whose members tooted, until they were quite purple in the face, through their rolled-up menus. Aunt Julia was not altogether familiar with the tune and knew still less of the words, but she beat the time with her gloves and came out quite strong on '*Marchons, marchons!*' which she did know.

"And then—what did we do next?" Larabee would say in telling the tale. "I don't remember it all, but I know Thiebaud made a speech and I made a speech, and Lucie sang the most heavenly innocent song, which brought tears to everybody's eyes—especially her own. And Ducroix sang a patriotic thingumajig and Laurier—well, Laurier

simply wept quarts. We stayed an hour and Aunt Julia held my hand all the way home. Dear old Aunt Julia!"

Here Larabee would relapse into a short silence, during which he would appear to be deeply interested in the toe of his shoe or the grain of the parquetry. Then he would lift his head with a quick, defiant gesture, dear to his friends, and his laughter-loving eyes would let themselves smile as he went on.

"When we got back to the hotel," he would say, "I asked Aunt Julia what sort of a report she was going to make to the Woman's Club on her return. She waited a minute, and then she said:

"Well, one that I've made a good many times before this, Phil."

"And what is it, Aunt Julia?" I asked.

"Oh," and she patted my hand as she let go of it; "I'll say that it's a pretty good world, after all; and not half as bad as it's generally painted."

"And do you know," Larabee would conclude, "I'm inclined to think that the Woman's Club got hold of one real good chunk of wisdom when Aunt Julia told them that. I hope they spread it on the minutes before it had a chance to get away."

## ANNIVERSARY

IT seems the year remembers and it brings  
 Across the hillsides a familiar light,  
 The orchard lands put on accustomed white,  
 And all old-time beloved April things  
 Come back for welcome: flower and bird and leaf  
 Each in its place, cry out against my heart  
 As if the very springtime guessed the part  
 It held in this dear festival of grief.  
 Ah, you, that for a year have been with God;  
 Must the soft splendor of this wistful day  
 And I keep faith—alone remembering?  
 Your daffodils blaze in the garden sod,  
 Your apple boughs drift white in their old way—  
 Is Heaven so far you do not know it's spring?

ARTHUR KETCHUM.

## WITH THE SUBMERGED TENTH

By Gertrude Lynch

Author of "The Fighting Chance," Etc.

IT was just as she had feared, only where she had hoped to find delicately suggested lines they were, on the contrary, etched firmly.

Everything was superlatively decorous. The apartment was perfect in what advertising decorators call *its appointments*; the maid was a living and breathing protest to the accepted belief that incompetence and service are synonymous; she did not object to caps; she was always neat and obliging, the routine of the home under her supervision went on without clashing. She was so perfect that she did not even appeal to the sense of humor.

Every evening, promptly at half after six, her husband arrived home from his day in "the Street." She knew exactly what he would say before he said it, and had only a worn list of conversational amenities at her own beck and call.

Sometimes they dined alone, and went to the theater; sometimes they dined out or had small dinner parties at home, but the evenings were comparatively alike, varied only by the personalities of their guests, a new *entrée*, or a moment of indecision between conflicting entertainments.

There were times when she felt that she must stand in the center of the apartment and scream from mere suppressed excitement. It was not that she objected to the holy estate of matrimony, only the form it had assumed in her own life. If she could, she would not choose to go back to the old days with their color, their life and their unconventionalities, for they had served their purpose and had nothing else to

offer; to retrace them would be to travel footsore over a well-trod road, but there was something in them, an elusive, intangible something, which, if she could have taken into her new life, would stir stagnation, and make her forget that the future was as void of interest as a last year's visiting list.

Her dissatisfaction did not extend to her husband. He represented all that she had most desired, in her best moments, for the partner of her joys and sorrows. He possessed no weak point for criticism, in appearance, education or social status. He had wrested from existence the secret of well being and right living, and had no flagrant fault which rasped her nerves.

There had been no ecstacies in their relations; but, on the other hand, there had been no regrets. She had accepted him after due thought, as he had offered himself. He had not objected to a term of probation, and apparently lost neither sleep nor appetite during its progress.

They had discussed the relation of marriage from all its viewpoints, in twentieth century simplicity. They both acknowledged their lost illusions, and compared their salient points; they regretted with equal fervor their inability to counterfeit moonlight-and-first-love sentiment. The admiration and liking they had for each other at first deepened into mutual understanding, and then into an affection which made a very good foundation for matrimony.

In this new life, so admirably based, she had believed that she would find an answer to all the uncertainties and dissatisfactions of the old. She did not.

There was an allurement in the former existence that held her at the time, and now pulled her with resistless force.

If she could only have stolen that quality from the old and put it in the new. If she could only—yes, she would be frank with herself—if she could find in her husband something of the recklessness, the magnetic unmorality of—Jim.

Jim and she had been *tillicums*. That was a word in his vernacular; it was Indian, and meant chums, friends, companions.

Jim had never made love to her. He had settled the matter to their mutual satisfaction in the first day of acquaintance, when they had met and clasped hands with sudden liking.

"A man and woman must be *tillicums*," he explained, with a Western largeness of gesture, "or else—everything."

They spent some of their working hours together, chasing stories for rival newspapers, and many of their playtimes discussing and settling every event in the universe.

Often she had sat, after the day's work was done, in the tiny suite of rooms she shared with a poet friend, and heard Jim's light step on the stairs, followed by the quick, alert touch on the bell. Suddenly the rooms, devitalized by the hours' stress of thought, would seem to become invigorated as by a breath of fresh air blowing over wide sweeps of plain.

"Come," he would say to her. "I'm restless. It's got me again."

She would seize her hat without further need of explanation, and they would go out together anywhere to get rid of four walls and possible conventionality. By mutual understanding, they would usually turn toward the submerged tenth, for it was there they most frequently found a background for their stories. Unmoved by mawkish sentiment or the cynicism of the worldly wise, they witnessed the primal tragedies and comedies of the multitude held in leash by ignorance and want.

Tired with the tramp, they would find some café, a *jardin d'été* unknown

to fashion, or even respectability, sit there in a retired corner and talk and talk and talk of everything, nothing—what matter, so long as they found it interesting.

It was all she could do sometimes to hold him back.

"I can't stand it, *tillicum*, much longer," he would protest. "I've got to breathe. I've got to get back where the men have codes, and where the women know how to love you—or leave you. I want to go where you live hard and die quick."

"But your opportunity, Jim." Even in the four walls of conversation, bounded by marriage ties, she could hear, as in a dream, her voice remonstrating.

"I know. I know. There's not much chance for a Western man in the newspaper field, and the sisters need to have girls' fool things; but, Lord, how I miss it. I wake up in the night, and can't breathe. What have you got here in the East for a real man? There's always something happening out there, you're always on the edge."

The blond head would sink down on the table or be turned away for a minute; there would be dark circles under the eyes, and a white line about the lips, when it resumed its former position.

"It's all right, *tillicum*, I've got the best of it this time, but some day—you'll see. I've nothing in the world but what I can sling in a bag, and when it gets me so hard I can't control it, there won't be any more desk in Park Row, no more stories for Sunday supplements, no more men with creased trousers and papier-maché women. Come on!"

Jim had been to her new home once to dinner. He was as conventional in manner as dress. His quick eyes took in, without seeming to wander, every detail of its snug correctness, from the centerpiece, where each flower stood upright in its separate lead, to the sheerness of the maid's muslin apron.

Her husband had talked politics, and Jim had listened attentively, answered at the right moments and been terribly bored; then he had talked, her hus-

band had listened and been bored in turn. She knew that they did not like each other from their excessive courtesy, the fact that her husband took out his choicest cigars and that Jim did not stay a moment after the hour offered excuse for escape.

She followed him to the door, and they stood a moment with the eyes of the boy upon them as he waited with the gate of the elevator open for the descending guest.

"Good-by, *tillicum*," Jim had said, with lingering touch and averted eye.

She knew that the good-by meant more than *au revoir*.

She had not seen him since.

Oh, the old days, with their quick coming and quick going impressions—the old days with Jim!

She took out her scrapbook one afternoon, while she was waiting for her husband's return, and studied it. She glanced at the color stories, the bits of poetry, the anecdotes where no one but herself and Jim knew the personal meaning. There were descriptions of Italian fêtes, Chinese New Years, Syrian cafés, East Side parks—the lungs of the submerged tenth; all the places where they had unearthed material worthy, at least, of ephemeral description.

She turned a page, and a smile came to her lips. It was aroused by the sight of an orange-tinted program, fastened with patent clasps.

The heading was "Carrando's Music Hall." Her eye caught the foreign words, *Donizi, Pascale, Zucconi* and the addendum, *Tizzone d'Inferno, Dramma Spettacolo*.

It was one of the many queer places they had found interesting, because they had viewed it through young, healthy enthusiasms. She wondered what her husband would think of it, and laughed at the incongruous thought.

He came in while she was laughing, and glanced over her shoulder.

"What is it?" he asked, curiously, pronouncing with Anglo-Saxon pertinacity the Latin syllables. "What's a *coppia* and a *jugovar*?"

She answered his questions with minute attention to details. If there was anything she had not told him of her old life it was because she had feared to bore him or be bored in turn by his questions.

He listened politely; he was seemingly amused at her unusual eloquence, then he touched her cheek.

"You must have Jim up again soon," he said, when she had finished her description. "You're getting lonesome for him, I can see."

They ate their dinner, discussed a new author, and the evening went into eternity to join the hundreds of its kind.

The next day was the same as the last.

There were a few housekeeping details, a shopping excursion, a little reading, a five o'clock tea, and with the coming twilight, the old *ennui* settled down anew. She knew what Jim meant when he came to her with the Western fever burning in his veins. Like him, she was tied down by opportunity, by habit, the fitness of things, the fear of an unanchored future, the calm affection of the bound together.

But if she could once more feel the thrill of the past or still the reckless longing that clutched her; if she could break away a little from monotony, and step into the core of things where life buzzed and seethed, and each minute had its picture to print on the brain film—or else forget it all.

The maid came in, even in the darkness avoiding stumbling, turned on the light, and handed her a telegram. Her husband would not be home to dinner. He was detained downtown by unexpected business.

The last time this had happened she had passed a wretched evening; like misery, *ennui* is less unbearable when companioned.

What could she do with the hours? Read? She had read until she was surfeited. Think? If she could but push in the stop of thought as one did the *vox humana* stop in an organ.

She ate a lonely dinner, then went back to her easy-chair, and tried to interest herself in a magazine.

The maid came to the door, and said, softly:

"I am going; you know it is my evening out."

Then she turned down the light, and sat a long time in the dark.

She seemed to hear the voice of Jim in her ears. "Come! it's got me. I can't keep still. It's the West; it's burning me up!"

She went into her room, took out a plain suit and hat from the wardrobe. She dressed hurriedly, as she had so often dressed when she had kept Jim impatiently tramping up and down in the corridor outside, or on the sidewalk when he was worse than usual and the small rooms stifled him.

She took a car downtown, transferring in a misty mental state, and having reached Washington Square turned east.

She had no particular goal in view. She wanted to wander, as she had so often wandered with Jim among the submerged tenth.

It was a hot summer night. Uptown the parks were filled with a restless, tired crowd, sitting on the benches, walking inertly through dust-laden stretches; from the park to the square there had been a succession of teeming cables, whirling hansom filled with gayly dressed women and their escorts, saunterers, hatless, gloveless, fleeing from indoor stagnation. She had glimpses here and there of vagrant trees rising in deformed protest from meager pedestals or cramped footholds, asphalt aquarelles of shimmering tints, and everywhere the contagious atmosphere of heat unrest.

East of the square, a few streets led her into the center of the submerged tenth. It was a different world, as if a curtain had been dropped between it and Fifth Avenue. The streets were narrow and crossed each other without reason, from afar you could hear the rumble of the L, which would appear and disappear at some unexpected zig-zag. The houses seemed alive, doors and windows filled with living pictures like the *genre* effects of some Dutch painter. Streets and sidewalks formed

a phantasmagoria of humanity. Across fire escapes, on the roofs and through small areas of space lines of flapping clothes, signals of distress, waved to and fro spectrally. From a nearby tenement came a shrill falsetto voice singing, in plaintive accents, the wail of the homesick:

Addio, mia bella Napoli,

Addio, addio.

La tua suave imagine

Che mai, che mai, scordar potra.

There were roses of the mire, with delicate faces and fragile bodies, and human poppies, flaunting a manner of indolent voluptuousness even in that squalid environment. The trained eye discerned bits of tragedy and comedy, here a couple of lovers walking hand in hand and murmuring the soft syllables of their mother tongue; there a tired woman, with a shabby shawl drawn tightly about her consumptive chest, her skirts clutched by a trio of children, while she tried to drag to their home a drunken and protesting husband; old men smoking the inevitable pipes, whose fires never seem to go out, but, like the flames in some cathedral, burn eternally; young men looking about for their mates; groups of girls exchanging jests with reluctant lovers.

Through the shifting crowds she sought a familiar figure, which ever eluded. At times a slouching walk, a hat tip-tilted, a quick, alert gesture would make her heart throb, then the resemblance would, on nearer approach, disappear. But the will-o'-the-wisp led her on and on, past remembered places and through streets little frequented by her class. Her path was obstructed by no curiosity, for the units of the submerged tenth are rarely interested outside of their primitive and personal needs. No one spoke to her or looked with more than a cursory curiosity.

She glanced up suddenly. She was standing in front of Carrando's music hall, the program of which she had read the night before. She fought a moment with hesitation, and then went up the steps, and through a narrow, ill-papered hall, passing one or two wait-

ers, who made way for her without greeting or surprise.

The hall opened into a gallery, where tables and chairs were placed, and below, the floor of the place had also its equipment of similar furniture. A narrow stage, with a rude scenic background, was occupied by a woman in a soiled evening gown, singing with a cracked voice and smirking by turns at the tables filled with roughly attired men and the tired pianist.

In the gallery the men talked together in low tones. They were anarchistic looking, and a royal plot might be hatched there; it was stated that one had been. Beside herself there was but one woman, a mature Italian *contadina*, with a red kerchief about her neck and a child who beat rhythmically against the gallery edge with a tin shovel. She had seen the place before through the medium of Jim's quick sense of humor, human sympathies and vital impulses. All at once the color and light seemed to disappear; it was simply uninteresting, squalid; it was like the background of an unpleasant dream from which she would soon awake. Had it always been like this, or had she lost the faculty of the keener vision?

She wanted to go, yet the power of the past held her. If he would only come and help her. Uptown was *ennui* lying in wait; here, in the submerged tenth, once so full of suggestion, mystery and allurement, the sense of things was missing. She felt as if her soul were suspended in space, homeless, friendless. If Jim were there.

She heard a quick step behind her. It was different from the footfalls of the men who had entered while she had been sitting there. Her keen perceptions told her it was the step of a gentleman. She did not turn for a minute; when she did his back was toward her, and in the obscure corner she had eluded sight.

She was tense, breathless, trying to control the situation.

In a moment, though her face was still averted, she felt that he had seen her, and, after a second's waiting, he advanced.

The waiter with presentiments of an unusual fee, held a chair deferentially, and he seated himself opposite her, after a smile of greeting. They might have been sitting at some fashionable uptown café for any surprise that was manifested.

"I am sure they have good Italian vermouth here," was his initial remark, "and a good vermouth is not unpleasant in this heat."

She assented quietly.

They were silent while the waiter filled the order, then he explained his appearance.

"I went to the ferry with Downs when business was over. Then I took the car across, and thought I would walk a little."

He stopped to pour the vermouth from bottle to glass.

"I remembered the program you showed me last night. I thought I would like to look the place up, and see what it was. I don't understand how I ever came to recall the address, but I suppose it was a mere freak of memory; we all have them. The things we remember are much more surprising than those we forget."

She nodded again. Speech was an impossibility.

The woman with a soiled evening gown had been replaced by a tenor whose voice suggested a past and his manner a fall from a higher level.

They were unobserved in the quiet corner. There was a sweetness in the voice, strained and broken as it was, that unlocked the doors of reserve.

He leaned forward, and placed his hand on hers, which were clasped before her on the table.

"Poor little girl."

She met his eyes fully for the first time. She had not known what she expected, surely not that.

He kept a firm clasp on the fingers shrinking a little as if conscious of the mental infidelity.

He had never been sentimental, and even the unusual environment fraught with emotion could not change him temperamentally, but when they had talked together heart to heart she had

always found a healthiness of view which helped her weaker vision. He did not disappoint her now.

"Tell me what it is."

She told him—all the dissatisfactions, the weight of barren nights and hopeless days, the longings for the old stimulus, the hatred of the new monotony, the conventions which swathed her helpless spirit, and the lawlessness of the bohemians as symbolized by Jim, the best and most amusing of the lot.

The tenor was responding to an encore, and was singing a pathetic ballad; the woman with the red kerchief was dabbing her eyes, and two men with beetling brows, whose heads had been together but a moment before, straightened up and listened.

"It's the penalty," he said, at length. "That's all. You've got to be a brave woman and face it. I knew it would come. I knew when it did come, but I couldn't help you. I can't help you now, except with my sympathy and understanding."

His hand gripped hers until they ached, but the physical pain relieved the mental.

"Every man has to solve this problem, if he's the right sort, when he enters the blessed state of matrimony, and shuts the door of his past. It will blow open occasionally, and the glimpses are tantalizing, and the old voices call. The few women like you, who have stood at the heart of things, when they meet the monotony of secure days suffer, too, perhaps more, for they have no absorbing work for relief. Life is a game of give and take; everything has its price, and we must pay it like thoroughbreds—when the time comes."

She did not raise her head, and after a few minutes he continued.

"I don't want to preach. We've faced everything in the right way, we must face this." He put his hand heavily on the table so that the glasses shook. "I've had it. I had it to-night when I walked back after leaving Downs. We had been talking of our bachelor days, and the fever of the past was in my veins—the old free nights when I didn't know where I was going,

and didn't care. Come. Be a brave soldier, little girl, it's the only way."

She touched his coat sleeve gently.

"Oh, if you hadn't understood, how could I have gone back?"

He put her light scarf about her, and they went out.

It was true, as he had intimated, there would be other dark hours, other wearinesses, but they would never be so black again. If she had but trusted him she might have been spared much suffering. The quarter of an hour in the dark corner of the evil-smelling café, with its dingy songsters and its anarchistic drinkers, had brought them nearer together than they had been since the first days of their marriage.

She clung closely to him as they threaded through the swarming crowds. They had been colorful to her once, they were so no longer, for the inspiration and enthusiasm had gone, and she saw them as they really were.

They made way for a congestion of passers-by at a corner of a triangulated space. There was a familiar face in the crowd, and the touch on her husband's arm suddenly quickened into life.

"It's Jim," she whispered. They stood for a moment so closely that their garments touched, but he did not see them. They drew away, and watched him. His attention was absorbed by the face of the girl he was with.

She was shrinking back a little. She was young, pretty, well gowned, and had the manner that speaks the sheltered life.

"Do you think we had better?" she was saying, hesitatingly; the hesitation a mixture of conventions and perfect trust in her escort. "I would never dare tell mamma."

"Tell her, nonsense," said Jim, with his air of perfect candor. "She'll think it's all right so long as you were with me. You must see the place I was telling you about where my *tillicum* and I used to go. Come."

Jim was better dressed than he used to be. His hat was no longer set rakishly on his head. He patronized a better tailor, and the old restlessness

was replaced by the poise of the man who has found himself.

He put his arm about the girl's shoulder to protect her from a rowdy; in the gesture was the air of proprietorship which a man assumes toward the one woman.

Her husband did not disturb her reverie. They watched the two until a corner hid them from sight.

The old life had indeed passed away; the evening was but a leaf of the past which had blown across her path.

She looked up the avenue, brilliant with its arcs of lights, its well-dressed crowds, its spaces and splendors. She breathed a sigh of relief as she stepped into the cab and leaned back. Her hand sought her husband's behind the security of closed doors. Suddenly she realized that something she had missed had come into her life—it was the perfect love that casteth out fear. She had found it at last, there amid the submerged tenth, where she had worked and played in other days.



## MAY SONG

THE trees are white with blossom snow,  
The grass is bright with gold—  
Where scores of dandelions show  
Their sunny heads that hoary grow  
Before the month is old.  
And from the nearest apple tree  
A clear voice calls "*Phæbe—Phæbel!*"

The fragile rue-anemones  
Are blooming in the wood,  
And saxifrage around the trees  
On sturdy stem defies the breeze  
That blows in fitful mood.  
Half-hid in leaves beneath my feet  
Are violets nestling, pale and sweet.

A flaming oriole darts by  
To help his mate who weaves  
Their cup-like home that swings on high,  
And swallows chatter as they fly  
To build beneath the eaves.  
While far away, from dawn to dark,  
Sings tenderly the meadow-lark.

Life's current rising in a flood  
O'erbrims the banks of joy—  
And primal instincts in the blood  
Grow with the opening leaf and bud  
To bliss without alloy.  
'Tis wooing-time in field and tree—  
And Nature woos my heart from me!

ROSLIE ARTHUR.

## FIELD FLOWERS

By Maurice Maeterlinck

Author of "Monna Vanna"

**T**HREE are flowers that are not wearied when their magnificent sisters are trembling in the depths of the hothouses.

They will still be there, in the flooded fields, in the broken paths, and adorning the roads with their simplicity, when the first snows shall have covered the countryside. No one sows them, and no one gathers them. They survive their glory, and man treads them under foot.

Formerly, however, and not so long ago, they alone represented nature's gladness. Formerly, however, a few hundred years ago, before their dazzling and chilly kinswomen had come from the Antilles, from India, from Japan, or before their own daughters, ungrateful and unrecognizable, had usurped their place, they alone enlivened the stricken gaze; they alone brightened the cottage porch, the castle precincts, and followed the lovers' footsteps in the woods. But those times are no more; and they are dethroned. They have retained of their past happiness only the names which they received when they were loved.

But those names show all that they were to man: all his gratitude, his studious fondness, all that he owed them, all that they gave him are there contained, like a secular aroma in hollow pearls. And so they bear names of queens, shepherdesses, virgins, princesses, sylphs and fairies, which flow from the lips like a caress, a kiss, a murmur of love.

Our language, I think, contains nothing that is better, more daintily, more affectionately named than those homely

flowers. Here the word clothes the idea almost always with care, with light precision, with admirable happiness. It is like an ornate and transparent stuff that molds the form which it embraces and has the proper shade, perfume and sound.

Call to mind the Easter daisy, the violet, the bluebell, the poppy, or rather, coquelicot: the name is the flower itself. How wonderful, for instance, that sort of cry and crest of light and joy: "Coquelicot!" to designate the scarlet flower! See the primrose, the cowslip, the periwinkle, the anemone, the wild hyacinth, the blue speedwell, the forget-me-not, the wild bindweed, the iris, the harebell; their name depicts them by equivalents and analogies which the greatest poets but rarely light upon. It represents all their ingenuous and visible soul. It hides itself, it bends over, it rises to the ear even as those who bear it lie concealed, stoop forward, or stand erect in the corn and in the grass.

Those are the few names that are known to all of us; we do not know the others, though their music describes with the same gentleness, the same happy genius, flowers that we see by every wayside and upon all the paths.

Thus the banks of the roads are a pale violet: it is the sweet scabious, that has blossomed at last, discreet, aristocratically poor and modestly beautiful, as her title, that of a veiled gem, proclaims. Around it, a treasure lies scattered: it is the buttercup, that has two names, even as it has two lives; for it is at once an innocent that covers the grass with sundrops, and a redoubtable and

venomous sorcerer that deals out death to heedless animals.

Again we have the milfoil and the St. John's wort, little flowers once useful, that march along the roads, like silent schoolgirls, clad in a dull uniform; the vulgar and innumerable bird's groundsel; her big brother, the hare's lettuce of the fields; then the dangerous nightshade; the bitter-sweet, that hides herself; the creeping knotweed, with the patient leaves; all the families without show, with the resigned smile, that already wear the practical gray livery of autumn.

But among those of March, April, May, June, July, remember the glad and festive names, the springtime syllables, the vocables of azure and dawn, of moonlight and sunshine! Here is the snowdrop, or amaryllis, that proclaims the thaw; the stitchwort, or lady's collar, that greets the first communicants from the hedges, whose leaves are as yet indeterminate and uncertain, like a diaphanous green lye. And the others—to tell their names is to recite a poem of grace and light. We have reserved for them the most charming, the purest, the clearest sounds, and all the musical gladness of the language. One would think that they were the dancers and chorus of an immense fairy scene, more beautiful, more startling and more supernatural than the scenes which unfold themselves on Prospero's Island, at the Court of Theseus, or in the Forest of Arden.

And the comely players of this silent, never-ending comedy—goddesses, angels, she-devils, princesses and witches, virgins and courtesans, queens and shepherd girls—carry in the folds of their names the magic sheen of innumerable dawns, of innumerable springtimes contemplated by forgotten man, even as they also carry the memory of thousands of deep or fleeting emotions which were felt before them by generations that have disappeared, leaving no other trace.

They are interesting and incomprehensible. They are vaguely called the "weeds." They serve no purpose. Here

and there a few, in very old villages, retain the spell of contested virtues. Here and there, one of them, right at the bottom of the apothecary's or herbalist's jar, still awaits the coming of the sick man, faithful to the infusions of tradition.

But skeptic medicine will have none of them. No longer are they gathered according to the olden rites; and the science of "simples" is dying out in the housewife's memory. A merciless war is waged upon them. The husbandman fears them; the plow pursues them; the gardener hates them, and has armed himself against them with clashing arms—the spade and the rake, the hoe and the scraper, the weeding hook, the grubbing ax. Along the highroads, their last refuge, the passer-by crushes them, the wagon bruises them.

No matter, they are there; permanent, assured, abundant, peaceful; and not one but answers the summons of the sun. They follow the seasons without swerving by an hour. They know nothing of man, who exhausts himself in conquering them, and, so soon as he rests, they spring up in his footsteps. They live on, audacious, immortal, untamable. They have peopled our flower baskets with extravagant and unnatural daughters; but they, the poor mothers, have remained similar to what they were a hundred thousand years ago. They have not added a fold to their petals, reordered a pistil, altered a shade, invented a perfume. They keep the secret of a mysterious mission. They are the indelible primitives. The soul is theirs since its origin. They represent, in short, an essential smile, an invariable thought, an obstinate desire, of the earth.

That is why it is well to question them. They have evidently something to tell us. And, then, let us not forget that they were the first—with the sunrises and sunsets, with the springs and autumns, with the song of the birds, with the hair, the eyes and the divine movements of women—to teach our fathers that there are useless and beautiful things in this world of ours.

## MRS. NEVIN, REFORMER

By Josephine Dixon

PRETTY little Mrs. Nevin broke up her shredded wheat biscuit, and poured a stream of "Wately's Supreme Elixir of Maple Syrup" upon it. She stirred a spoon meditatively in the cup of cereal coffee while the compressed tablets of saccharine dissolved. Mr. Nevin folded his paper carefully, and placed it beside his place. He refilled a large cup with strong coffee from the *cafetière* beside him; heaped his plate high with steaming griddle cakes, and with generous enjoyment devoured porterhouse steak, omelette and potatoes. His wife, with pained resignation, sought to conceal her disgust. Mr. Nevin recognized the effort, and laughed —a great splashing laugh, that rattled the glasses on the table.

"I presume you know that those cakes are made of fine flour," she said.

The man looked at them speculatively over his large, round glasses.

"There's not much in the way of eating that's too fine for me."

"But it's not that. I mean they are made of flour from which all the real substance, the gluten, has been removed. All the nourishment has been taken out of it, and only waste products remain."

Mr. Nevin grew quite red in the face.

"Who did it?" he demanded. "Just tell me that, and I'll see that it doesn't occur again. If it's Alice, I'll discharge her on the spot. Cook or no cook, I'll not have my food meddled with. If it's the grocer, I'll pay him a visit on my way downtown. I pay the highest prices for my groceries, and I mean to have the best."

Mrs. Nevin, a little frightened, hastened to explain, and her husband, with another series of roars that passed for a laugh, fell on the cakes.

The lady winked her large blue eyes, and introduced a new subject.

"Do you know, I'm worried to death about Frank. Of course, he's your nephew, and I presume you will both think it is none of my affair, but I'm not of the disposition to let any wrong go unrighted. I'm a natural reformer."

"So I have noticed," sighed Mr. Nevin.

"Frank is a good boy—I call him a boy because he seems one to me, although he is a year older than I am; but I am afraid he is getting in bad company, and getting wild, and all that sort of thing."

"Have you heard anything?" asked her husband, in concern.

"I saw him smoking. No man who smokes can hope to avoid a certain breaking down of all his faculties. It is time some one told that to Frank."

"I have a suspicion he may have heard it before."

"And that is not all. I know that he happens to be dealing in stocks. Heaven knows that smoking is bad enough. In all the annals of our time, there is no counting the women whose lives have been ruined by the tobacco habit."

"Hum, the ladies must be getting frisky. In my younger days, women did not have the tobacco habit so generally."

Of signs of irony there were none, though Mrs. Nevin looked for them.

"Of course I do not mean that the women smoke, but their husbands and sons and brothers do, and it makes the women so miserable, so fatally unhappy!" She made a touching little gesture of pantisocratic despair. "Then

there is the liquor habit; but nowadays, gentlemen do not drink."

"I understand, then, it is only the wives and daughters and sisters of gentlemen who suffer. What an admirable arrangement, since they also have most of the compensations!"

Mrs. Nevin regarded him in a fluttering daze.

"I—I don't exactly catch your meaning," she hesitated; and then waving it aside as a matter of small consequence, she began once more on the subject of the erring nephew.

"I met him yesterday, riding about in a new automobile—one of those big, snorting things, touring cars I think they call them. I waved to him to stop, and when he came up alongside of me, I said: 'Frank, where did you get that thing?' Frank is always so silly. He replied: 'I picked it up in the baby carriage.' Now, of course, that was a mere evasion. It was ten times as big as a baby carriage, and I told him so, and insisted on knowing the truth, and then he said—very coolly, without a sign of embarrassment—that he had been making money on stocks. Indeed, John, I nearly fainted. You know how honorable all my family are. I think it would kill poor mother, if she knew I had married into a family where there were any gamblers."

Mr. Nevin cleared his plate, and fidgeted a little uneasily, placing a large and loving hand over a pocket that contained certain papers.

"Did you remonstrate with him?"

"I did not have the opportunity then, for the automobile was puffing and snorting, so I told him to come around this morning at ten. It's about that now, isn't it? And I warned him as we parted to keep away from those sinful pail shops. He seemed to be greatly amused; Frank's levity is very trying. I shall talk with him seriously to-day. I shall point out to him the crime he is doing his future. I shall tell him how unhappy it makes you and me. I shall appeal to all his good impulses, and I feel sure that he will go away from me a better man. One never knows how much harm may be averted by a

little word dropped now and then, when a person is beginning on a downward path. I should reproach myself all my life if I had not talked with him about this."

John Nevin rose from the table, and passed around it to kiss his wife.

"Your intentions are thoroughly honorable, my dear," he remarked, in a way that left little Mrs. Nevin suspicious.

Promptly at eleven o'clock, Frank Nevin appeared. His excuses for being late were as ingenious as they were untruthful. They contained references to a bad cold, a belated breakfast and several other fanciful conditions which were wanting in corroborative evidence. But Mrs. Nevin, intent on her proselytism, was not too critical of the smaller offenses of which he might be guilty. She settled herself in a large chair by the fire, and leaning forward that she might sternly keep his attention, she began a little speech that had been in course of preparation for many moons. Frank, extending his long, loose legs toward the fire, his indulgent gaze fixed on the tips of his patent leather boots, looked the penitent to perfection. Pretty Mrs. Nevin felt a warm glow of holiness spread to the very tips of her diamonded fingers.

"You know," she was saying, softly, "it is all for your good. It is painful for me to have to talk to you in this way, but I want to take a mother's place to you."

Frank wiped away an incipient grin with the back of his white hand.

"You are a year younger than I am," he observed. "At least, you were a couple of years ago. Judging by looks, I should say you were five years younger by this time."

Mrs. Nevin lifted her head a little, to glance complacently at the satisfying reflection of herself in the glass.

"I am glad you think I am not getting old so very fast," she digressed; and then, seeing a route along which she might point a moral, she added, piously:

"I attribute it all to my habits of life. At thirty, most women begin to get wrinkled and haggard. Their skins are yellow and their eyes dull. People say,

oh, they are getting old, and think that is the reason, and the poor things believe they have no redress, and accept it in the spirit of the martyr, without knowing that it might have been prevented. Now, it isn't age that makes a woman old. It's fine flour bread, nitrogenous food and coffee. If women gave up eating these things and avoided all meats, and eggs, and cheese, and tuberous vegetables, and everything containing nitrogen, and lived on the natural whole cereals, there wouldn't be a wrinkle on the face of the earth."

"But how about the faces of the ladies, auntie mine? It sounds as if they might get the colly-wobbles, even if they didn't have the wrinkles."

She ignored him dramatically.

"Dieting is an especial passion with me," she continued, with saddened dignity. "I consider that there is more demand for reform in that line than in any other; but I sent for you to-day not to talk over that matter, but to remonstrate with you on the life you are leading. You are breaking my heart, Frank."

A little shining tear stood in each eye, and she laid her hand on her heart and really thought she felt it being fractured. Frank squirmed about unhappily, and assured himself that it was nothing serious, and didn't deserve encouragement.

"Oh, Helen," he expostulated, "don't let's get catarrhal over it. It's bully good of you to do the Samaritan business with me, but I ain't worth it, and if I were, you see a woman can't always say just what's good for a fellow. A man's got to have some a—a—liberty, don't you know."

Mrs. Nevin wiped away the tears, and regarded him calamitously. Slowly she rolled up her blue eyes and dropped the lids over them.

"Oh, liberty, what crimes have been committed in thy name!" she murmured, just as Madame Roland would have done.

"Um, yes," returned Frank. "Take Liberty velvet as an example. You know the stuff, a cross between flannel

and caterpillars. Sells for forty-nine cents a mile on bargain days."

Helen stabbed him with a look of mingled disgust and hauteur.

"How can you be so frivolous?" she demanded, and without waiting to find out, she resumed her lecture.

"Speculating is only another form of gambling—you know that, Frank. A man, a brave man, would rather starve than take money he had not rightly earned. When you are in those frightful places where they are bartering stocks and trampling on men's souls, do you not feel ashamed of yourself?"

"Which place is this?" queried Frank, with growing interest.

"Why, the a—a—Wall Street. The place where the very bread is taken out of children's mouths; where the widow's cry for mercy is unheard; where a man's fortune is swept away at the toss of a hat; where—where—"

"Oh, Willy!" gasped Frank, irrelevantly.

"I know all about it. I have read Zola's 'La Bourse' and 'L'Argent,' and I have read 'The Pit,' and I know the crime of it all. More than that, it's so unrefined. I think the talk about the bears is shocking enough, but those other a—animals—why, I think it is positively repulsive. But I could stand that"—with an effective little break in her voice—"I could stand that—the knowing there were men in the world bent on this diabolical work; but to know there is one in my own family, one whom I would give the world to save from any sin—you know, Frank, I love you not only for my husband's sake, but for yourself—to know that you are on the verge of ruin—why, Frank, I just feel that I can't see you go down to perdition without stretching out a hand to save you."

She paused, dazzled by her own eloquence, and Frank uncrossed his long legs and straightened up in the chair. He took one of her little hands in his, and turned the shining rings around her fingers, in a very pretty posture of meditation.

"Come, come," he said, encouragingly. "It's not so devilish bad as you

think. You see, it isn't as if I didn't do things on the square. I'm not dealing on the margin, or cornering common necessities, or doing any skin game. I've got a little money to invest. I buy the stocks all straight enough, and then I wait for them to go up or down, and when they're down, I don't sell, and when they're up, sometimes I do. And sometimes when I get pushed a little, I lose some money, and when I make a trifle, it isn't as if I was snatching it out of anybody's pocket. It doesn't strike me as being any more satanic than these auctions that you and all the girls haunt so much. You see, there you're all 'bearing' the market, and you haven't any pity for the one bu—"

Mrs. Nevin gave a little cry of horror, and Frank dropped her hand to cover his mouth.

"I beg your pardon," contritely. "It's the fault of my associations. Like bad art in the schools and all that sort of thing. Vitiates one's understanding of the true and beautiful, you know. But to come back to our subject. For instance, if I buy one hundred shares of Allegheny Steel and Wire, preferred, and—"

"But I don't see how you can prefer it. That's just what I am trying to persuade you you shouldn't do."

She awaited his confusion.

The young man drew his eyelids closer and reflected.

"Well, I don't prefer it; then, take tobacco—"

Helen gave a little scream of horror.

"What do you mean, Frank Nevin? Are you suggesting that I could do such a thing?"

He made haste to explain.

"Of course I didn't mean it just that way; but, you see, I chose it to show you that I am not so hipped on speculating as you seem to think. Now, there's a nice round little sum to be made on tobacco to-day, and I'm going to cut it out. The Silver Lake Hunt is going to have a run, and although I like money well enough, I like a good run on a crisp day a lot better. That doesn't look as if I had lost my head on stocks, does it?"

Mrs. Nevin disliked of all things to answer, without time for reflection, questions propounded by her husband or her husband's nephew. The questions generally contained a "kick" that operated to her own undoing. Like all reformers, she found that her fondest reforms had a way of dovetailing into vices that was most confusing, and more times than not, by answering a question suddenly in a way that seemed not only the holiest, but the only possible one, she found herself committed to an argument she would rather have perished than admit. Her mind, like her figure, was built on sweet little curves, and only those who have inherited a circumspect mind can appreciate its inconveniences. Her only safety, for the most part, lay in patiently and forgivingly ignoring the speaker. This she did for Frank, and he continued:

"There's no doubt I've got a straight tip on tobacco, and I suppose I could just about double any money that I'd put into it; but of course you don't care for any details."

Helen was too feminine not to love details, no matter what they concerned, so she sought about in her misty mind for a justifiable and consistent reason for expressing interest.

"Although they must be repulsive," she ventured, "I am not sure but that I should like to hear them. I am giving a talk to-morrow to the boys from the Junior Republic on the subject of the 'Ethics of Eating as Applied to Citizenship, and the Various Modes of Making a Living.' I might be able to use this thing you mention to further clarify their ideas about gambling."

"So you might," he assented, cheerfully. "No doubt it would be a case of a word to the wise not being necessary. Well, you know the tobacco market is as flighty as a mosquito, partly on account of the season and partly because of the strikes in Cuba. The whole business is bearish, everybody thinking the lowest prices have not been reached. Now, I happen to know that the time is ripe for a bull—beg your pardon—movement, for I am the unworthy and poorly rewarded counsel of an English

Porto-Rican company that will control the whole situation this afternoon. I know how long to 'stay,' and I know to the minute when to 'flit.' Now, you see, if I were a 'piker,' or a 'jobber,' I could do myself a nice little turn on the fluctuations alone."

Mrs. Nevin regarded him with round, unintelligent eyes.

"I—I don't believe I could make it clear to the boys of the Junior Republic," she admitted, weakly. "It sounds so a—a—technical and—and unlady-like. If you could—a—elucidate it a little, I might—"

Frank elucidated it promptly.

"It means," he said, briefly, "I've come on a tip a little out of the regular. If I copper it, I gather in the needful. If I don't, some one else gets it, and I ride with the hunt. See?"

"You say if you don't get the money, some one else does?" she questioned.

He nodded.

"There isn't any justice in that, is there?"

She generously assigned his laugh to cynicism, and not to herself.

"The market isn't exactly run on that plan, you know," he explained. "Every man goes in for himself."

"Well, I think that is very wicked," she commented, righteously. "But if the money has to go to some one—that it is obliged to, I don't see—it seems to me that so long as you might have it—that is, so long as it actually ought to belong to you, why it seems to me—at least, I should say that you ought to have it, don't you know; that in just common equity—that is to say, it belongs to you."

It was Frank's turn to be startled. He pulled himself out of his lounging position, and sat up in his chair.

"Wh-why, Helen Nevin! What kind of advice is that to give to a motherless boy, who eats meat and all kinds of hydrocarbogenous food. Don't you see the thing's off color, crooked, tainted, and that sort of thing?"

Mrs. Nevin's powers of sophistry had not abated. She shook her head, quite unconvinced. The natural feminine cupidity was asserting itself.

"But," she said, in italics, "if you are cleverer than another man, and get in a position to hear more things, and get reliable information in advance of other people, I can't see but that it is right for you—that it is even your duty to profit by it."

"Gee," said Frank, in honest astonishment, "you talk like a pious plunger. I believe you're equal to buying a seat on the Exchange."

Mrs. Nevin, a little flattered, remarked, casually:

"Why, I might; I've always wanted to see what they do there. Do they have reserved seats?"

He explained at length, and while he was yet talking, Helen fell into a deep reverie. Even after he had paused, she offered no answer. At last she spoke.

"On all ordinary occasions," she began, "you know how unalterably opposed I am to any—a—dealing in stocks."

He nodded seriously, and she accepted the affirmation unfeebly.

"I could not in general recommend that you take any money that should come from such a source, but it seems to me that the conditions are different in this case, and that things being as they are, there can be no possible objection to your taking money that is so obviously due you. Now, if it was different—if it were wheat or corn, or any of the cereals upon which lives are dependent, nothing on earth could persuade me to give you this advice, but since it is tobacco—a vile poison that is ruining the happiness and health of forty-five million out of our seventy million of inhabitants, I think you should do it, and I want to add that in case you shouldn't have the ready money to make your—a—purchases, you may feel free to call on me."

Frank had an idea, which he put away promptly. He said, coarsely: "By Golly!" and took a turn or two around the room. When he came back and sat down, he made a simple proposition, tentatively, to his uncle's wife.

"Why don't you go in on your own hook? The brokers have plenty of women clients."

He had expected to be withered root and branch, but instead she gazed at him unseeingly for a space of time, and then, with bright, unsteady eyes, asked:

"Is it perfectly certain that I should not lose?"

Frank clung to his chair, and stared at her in a shockingly rude manner.

"You don't mean to say," he gasped, "that you really would turn little lamb! Where will the boys from the Junior Republic turn for spiritual guidance?"

She was too absorbed to notice the sarcasm.

"I have money in the bank not bringing me a cent. If—if you think it would not be dangerous to buy up some of this tobacco, it might be that you could turn it to some account for me. Of course, as I have said before, I would only do it with opium, or tobacco, or coffee, or something of that sort. Now, if it were whole wheat—"

Frank consulted his watch before he interrupted.

"There isn't any time to lose if you are in earnest about it. I'm fitted out with an elastic conscience myself, and I don't mind so dreadfully giving up the hunt, but I hope you haven't forgotten that you belong to a family that has never gambled on stocks, and that no man of honor could accept money gained in that way, eh?"

Mrs. Nevin had gone to her desk, and was writing her name in flowing English script at the bottom of a check. She blotted it carefully, and handed it to him, replying, with finality:

"I don't call this gambling. It is merely investing my money."

"By George," said Frank, as he took the blank check. "*Souvent femme varie.*"

As he put on his hat at the front door he came back, waving the check toward her, and asked:

"I suppose you are good, aren't you?"

She folded her hands serenely across her plump little bosom, and remarked, acquiescently:

"I have always tried to do my duty."

Mr. Nevin was late for dinner that evening, and when he came home, Helen and Frank were already at the table. His wife's cheeks were pink, and her eyes were very bright. On the plate before her reposed a large slice of roast beef, and on her side plate was a generous piece of fine-flour bread. A flaring glass, quite empty except for a semi-circle of lemon, stood in front of her. She caught his glance as it fell on the dishes. It was all too obvious to make any questions necessary, but the look that passed between the uncle and nephew contained a volume of explanation and congratulation.

Mrs. Nevin fluttered out of her chair, and running toward her husband, threw her arms about his neck.

"Oh, darling," she cried, "it's all too lovely! I gave Frank some of my money, and he invested it for me, and it's so beautiful, the way it has turned out! Why, I'm almost rich, and, oh, I'm so nervous I just had to do something or other, and I'm eating a little meat, just for my nerves, you know. Of course, I shall never do it again—and I believe I'll have money enough now to build the Home of Correct Diet for Working Girls, that I told you about—and, oh, isn't it all just too heavenly! And Frank has promised that he will never gamble on the edge again—"

"Margin," corrected Frank; but Mrs. Nevin was weeping joyfully, and did not hear him.



# A SECRET OF THE HEART

By Owen Oliver

I HAD served with Leonard in the tape and tintacks department for thirty years, when a reorganization lifted us both to that stage on the official ladder when presentation at court is usual.

We struggled into "civil uniforms of the fourth class" together in his room, with many anxious consultations how the things went on. When at last we were dressed he took a small golden lion from several wrappings of tissue paper and fastened it on his breast.

This was my first intimation that he possessed an "order." It was the Golden Lion of Emperia, he stated, in answer to my inquiry. This increased my surprise, as he had not, to my knowledge, any foreign service or interest; but he seemed unwilling to discuss the subject. So I dropped it. In the evening, however, we dined together, and he unbent over the wine. This was his story:

It was in 1876, when I had been three years in the office. We sat together in old Grudgeon's room, if you remember. I was very friendly with Sir Charles Daer in those days. He was plain "Charlie Daer" then, a junior clerk in the foreign office. He and I had planned to spend our holiday together in Paris and Switzerland; but, just before we had completed our arrangements, he proposed a trip to Latonia instead. It was a semi-independent little duchy in Emperia then, you'll recollect. He gave a dozen flimsy reasons for the change of plan; and finally, when these failed to move me, he gave the real one.

"Look here, old man," he said, "I know I can trust you. They want me to convey something to the grand duke.

I don't know the whole story myself, and I can't tell you what I do know; but it's only fair to warn you that I may be arrested, or have some trouble on the road. They're on the lookout to stop it getting to the grand duke. So don't come if you object to a little risk."

I thought the prospect of adventure rather an attraction than otherwise—I was younger then. So I went.

We set off from Charing Cross on the first Monday in July. Daer was late in meeting me at the station, owing to an attempt of a loafer to steal his hand bag; and an unlicensed porter tried to carry the same bag off when Daer was alighting at the railway station.

"They think it's in there," he told me, with a chuckle; "but it isn't."

He tipped a porter to guard his things while he went to a shop in the Strand to buy a particular brand of cigarettes. As we were returning, another loafer jostled him, and tried to draw him into an altercation; but a plain-clothes detective, who seemed to know Daer, suddenly appeared and the rascal moved off. Owing to the delay we only just caught the train, and I read Daer a lecture about his casual way of doing things; but he only smiled, and told me that "Casual is as casual does!"

We had no further trouble till we reached Darmanst, the first station in Emperia. There was a fuss there about Daer's baggage, which they pretended to think contained contraband. However, after turning it all out and delaying us till a later train, they professed to be satisfied.

At Kronington a man entered our carriage stealthily in the middle of the night. When I jumped up he ran

away, and the guard declared he had not seen him. I woke Daer, but he only laughed.

"Of course they haven't seen him," he said. "They're all in league. You know what they want?"

"You haven't told me about it," I reminded him. I confess I was feeling rather curious.

"Well," he said, "it's—what I haven't told you about."

Then he went to sleep again.

At Fursalle they searched my luggage as well as his. I came very near losing my temper with the officials, but Daer was imperturbable.

"They'll search us next," he declared, calmly; and at Thursoa they went so far as to make us turn out our pockets. I got very savage, and threatened them with the British consul; but Daer entreated me to keep quiet.

"These things always happen," he stated, "when one goes on this sort of mission. You see, the emperor wants what I am carrying pretty badly. He won't get it!"

"I can't make out how you've managed to conceal it during these searches," I said.

"No," he agreed, "you can't. Neither can they. That's just it. I'll tell you all about it afterwards, old chap; but not now. The human countenance can betray a good deal; and two human countenances can betray more than one. Don't you worry. We are nearing the end of our troubles now."

But at Marxia—which is only twenty-five miles from Latonia—our real troubles began. Just as the train was starting two officers entered our compartment. We were suspected of carrying certain documents inimical to his majesty, the emperor, they informed us, and we must consider ourselves under arrest. They were very polite; but the butt ends of their revolvers peeped ostentatiously from their pockets.

Daer pointed to them and shrugged his shoulders. Since argument would be too one-sided, he told them, smilingly, he would merely ask what they were going to do.

They were to escort us to Moran,

they said, which was some eighteen miles farther—an hour's journey on that slow line. And then? Oh! They supposed we should be searched. They had strict orders to see that we made way with nothing. Otherwise they were quite at our service. Would we have a cigarette?

I accepted one, but Daer said he would rather smoke his own, if they didn't mind. He smoked furiously for the rest of the journey, and said little. He turned rather pale, and lost his temper—which was unusual for him—when I suggested that he was smoking too much. I thought that he was upset by the prospect of losing his documents, and the consequences. I was very uneasy myself, for they held strong views, then as now, about *lèse majesté* in Emporia. I had no hope that he would succeed in evading the stringent search which would be made.

At Moran we were brought before a benevolent-looking, gray-haired old gentleman, who informed us that he was the governor of the province. He talked to us in a fatherly way, and advised Daer to give up the documents quietly, and so avoid any damage to our luggage, or unpleasant consequences to ourselves.

"You probably know," he concluded, in excellent English, "that your government would rather give up the documents quietly than be connected publicly with an attempt to convey them to the grand duke of Latonia. His majesty, the emperor, is also anxious to avoid publicity. Give them to me, and I am authorized not only to let you go unmolested, but to compensate you fully for any inconvenience to which you have been subjected in attempting to carry out your orders."

Daer stared at him in well-affected astonishment.

"I have no documents of state in my possession," he said. "I give you my word of honor."

"Ah!" The governor shrugged his shoulders. "Then I presume that you have them, Mr. Leonard?"

"I assure your excellency that I have not," I declared. "Indeed, I have not the slightest idea of the nature of the

documents to which you refer. I also give you my word of honor on both points."

He played with a paper knife. Then he looked keenly at Daer.

"Mr. Daer has not given his word that he knows nothing of the documents," he pointed out.

Daer tugged at his mustache, as he always did when he was planning something.

"I do not know the exact nature of the documents," he stated at length, "but, as you are evidently aware, I am in the foreign office. I can form a guess at their nature and the purpose which they would serve, if I had them. But, as I have told you, I have not."

"You know where they are?"

Daer looked up with a sudden smile. "I believe they are in Downing Street!" he said.

"Ah-h! I see! You have only copies."

"I have not even copies."

"Then you know where to lay your hand on them."

Daer smiled again.

"I do not," he said, emphatically.

"You have made away with them?"

Daer tugged his mustache again and frowned.

"I have answered all that your excellency can fairly ask," he said, boldly. "I need not remind you that we are British subjects, and that our government will regard any unjustified interference with us as an unfriendly act."

The governor shrugged his shoulders.

"Your government will be glad to keep silence about the matter if we find the documents," he asserted.

"You won't find them," Daer retorted, calmly.

The governor paced the room several times.

"Well," he said, "personally, I believe your word, gentlemen; but I must do my duty. If you will change into other garments, which I will supply, in the presence of an officer, I need not subject you to any personal indignity; but I must have all your belongings searched. Have you anything more to say?"

"Only to thank you for your courtesy," Daer said.

Our clothes and luggage were searched accordingly. They pulled our portmanteaus and dressing cases to pieces, broke our razors, and tooth brushes, sawed the backs of our brushes apart, and riddled our clothes, cigars, cigarettes, soap, pomade, etc., with long needles. They treated our books, letters and writing paper with acids to see if they could find any concealed writings, and they took our watches to pieces. But they discovered nothing. I was as surprised as they were, for Daer had told me a few minutes before our arrest that he had the documents safely. I could not conceive how he had either preserved them or made away with them, but I dared not ask him any questions, for fear the walls had ears—as I learned afterwards they had.

I was still more surprised at his subsequent line of action. The governor sent for us, apologized profusely, and invited us to become his guests while he sought authority to compensate us. Daer not only accepted the apology, but the invitation.

Meanwhile, he expressed a hope that his excellency would allow him to report the occurrence by telegram to the British foreign office, and ask whether we might accept the compensation. He would be pleased, he said, to show him the telegram, so that he might see it was not written in an unfriendly spirit. The governor agreed at once, and Daer dispatched a telegram in which he expressed our willingness to take compensation and let the matter drop.

The next day a reply came, telling us to await the arrival of a high official from the foreign office, before accepting anything. The governor had evidently seen the answer before we saw it, and was disturbed by it, though he endeavored to conceal his annoyance. Two days later Sir Digby Pougher arrived, complaining furiously of the absurd customs regulations under which his luggage had been so frequently searched.

Sir Digby was a heavy, haw-haw person. Subsequently I learned that he was one of the cleverest men in Europe.

At the time I thought him a pompous ass, and wondered what could have induced the authorities to send him. I was present at all his conferences with Daer, but became no wiser in consequence.

They always spoke of the documents as if they were a myth. I was not surprised at this, because I suspected they thought there was some means of overhearing them; but I utterly failed to detect any signs of a secret understanding between them. They talked of social and personal matters rather than official, and Sir Digby seemed chiefly interested in sampling the products of the country, with a view to some commercial treaty, concerning which he talked a great deal to the governor. He bought many samples, especially of wines and cigarettes, and expected us to help in trying them. They were usually of a vile description, and we endeavored to defer trial till he had left us—when we gave them to the servants!

After a few days Sir Digby authorized us to accept the compensation offered—which was very liberal—upon a promise being given that we should be molested no further. Then he departed; being seen off in great state by the governor and his staff. We stayed for a few days more, hunting and shooting. Then Daer informed the governor at dinner that we were departing for Latonia on the following morning. The governor put down the glass of wine which he was raising to his lips, and left it untasted. When the dessert was brought in he made a motion with his hand, and his staff left the room. Then he leaned forward, and looked closely at Daer.

"I should not go to Latonia for a couple of days, if I were you," he said.

Daer lit a cigar carefully.

"Why not?" he inquired.

"The journey is unsafe, just at present."

"In what way?"

The governor turned his cigar round in his fingers, and looked at it.

"There is a good deal of poverty in the district," he explained. "They barely live from one harvest to the next.

Just now they are waiting for the new crop. There is no real vice in them; but men become desperate on short rations. Some years ago"—he flashed a quick glance at Daer—"I remember that they derailed a train."

Daer shook his head. "Your excellency is capable of guarding a few miles of rail," he stated.

"Exactly," said the governor. "Exactly. I am making my arrangements. In a couple of days you will be able to travel in perfect safety."

"But we want to travel now," Daer persisted.

"Of course you do!" The governor leaned forward, and tapped the table. "To-morrow is the eighteenth. On the afternoon of the nineteenth the future position of Latonia will be settled, beyond the influence of the documents of which we spoke. You are a clever man, Mr. Daer."

"Pardon me!" Daer abandoned his careless air, and leaned forward, too. "I am not relying on cleverness. I am relying on your promise, made in the name of his majesty, the emperor, that we should be free to come or go unmolested. The honor of his majesty"—Daer tapped the table in his turn—"is pledged to our going where we wish and when we wish, free from harm or annoyance."

The governor drew a deep breath. Then he bowed.

His majesty was a tall, handsome man if I may apply such a term to him. When you wish to go you must go; and in safety. But I am to convey to you his majesty's request that, before going to Latonia, you will wait on him at Felicia. If you will go to-morrow morning—it is but a two hours' journey—a special train shall be prepared for you. After you have seen him, the same train will take you to Latonia, if you still desire. You may rely on his majesty's word, gentlemen."

"We unhesitatingly rely upon it," Daer replied, "and we shall have great pleasure in waiting on his majesty."

So we set out the next morning by the special train. A bent old gentleman, who, we learned, was the imperial chancellor, Count Ferisco, met us at the sta-

tion with a private carriage, and conveyed us to the palace. There we were shown to the emperor's apartments, and left alone with him.

His majesty was a tall, handsome man of about forty, with black hair and mustache, and piercing dark eyes. People may talk of rank as merely "the guinea stamp," but there was something indefinitely different from the ordinary mortal about him. Daer said afterwards that, if the emperor had simply commanded him to give up the documents, he would have felt it almost impossible to refuse him; and Daer is a resolute man, and no respecter of persons. However, he merely said: "Be seated, gentlemen," and we sat down.

"I have asked you to come and see me privately," he said, "so that we may discuss this matter as between gentlemen. I know I can trust to you not to repeat anything that I may tell you in confidence." We bowed. "I know, too, that, so far as your duty allows, you will be prepared to act in the honorable spirit usual among gentlemen of your nation."

"I am sure," Daer declared, "that our government had no thought of our acting otherwise."

"I am convinced that you carry certain documents to which I attach some political and much personal importance. I am pledged to make no attempt to obtain them forcibly, so you need not scruple to assent or deny."

"I am carrying copies, your majesty," Daer stated. The emperor bowed.

"I am obliged by your candor. I am not sure if you know why you are conveying them to the grand duke of Latonia; but I know. It is to give him a weapon which would enable him to resist my attempt to incorporate the duchy more completely in the empire. The question is to be settled to-morrow." He looked at Daer.

"Your majesty is quite correct."

"Do you know the exact nature of the documents?" Daer hesitated. "I do not ask you to mention their contents; but merely to say if you know them."

"I have never read them." Daer admitted, slowly. "I believe them to con-

tain certain informal admissions and agreements, which your majesty desires to ignore. I am not sure if I ought to admit so much; but I am safe in your majesty's hands."

The emperor bowed again.

"It is not so much the 'admissions and agreements' which I wish kept secret, Mr. Daer. I am prepared to maintain that these are no longer relevant. It is the incidentals of the correspondence—the names of the correspondents—the allusions to persons, and—and what may be inferred as to their relations to myself. Do not mistake me." He drew himself up proudly. "There is nothing that touches my honor; nothing that I am ashamed of. Only—it would pain some who are near and dear to me. A king cannot yield to love; but"—his face twitched slightly—"he may suffer from it. The secret that I would preserve is—a secret of the heart."

He paused for a moment, as if buried in his thoughts.

"Your majesty," Daer said, "we are only instruments. Will you permit me to say—knowing I can speak for my friend as well as for myself—that we regret most deeply to learn the nature of the documents? I am sure that our government does not desire those 'incidental consequences' of which your majesty speaks."

"I doubt," said the emperor, "if your government foresees them. I scarcely think that, if you read the documents, you would recognize their full import. My family would; and the grand duke would. You are gentlemen. Your masters are gentlemen. The grand duke is not. Your government would use only the agreement against me. He would use the rest. He would use it now to preserve such independence as he has. He would use it afterwards for the other purpose—or for very spite. He would yield me these documents at a price, and keep copies of them. You would not wish this?"

"Your majesty has a proposal to make?" Daer suggested.

"Yes. Your government wishes to preserve the partial independence of Latonia; but it is not prepared to take

official action—which would mean war—to that end. Therefore, you are conveying these documents to the grand duke privately. My proposal is that your government should deal privately with me. Bring me the original documents, and an assurance—a verbal one will satisfy me—that no copy or record of them has been kept; and the grand duke shall retain so much independence as he enjoys at present, so long as I live. The date for deciding the matter shall be extended till you bring a reply. Meanwhile, I trust to you to carry nothing to the grand duke."

Daer drew out his cigarette case and handed to the emperor—four cigarettes!

"I have nothing to carry to him now, sir," he said. Then we went.

"Now," said Daer, as we traveled back to Moran in the gorgeous saloon carriage, "I can give you the explanation. When it was decided to place the grand duke in possession of these secret records, so as to strengthen his hands in the contest with the emperor, Sir Digby thought it prudent to keep the originals in the foreign office for fear of loss, and possibly because he did not trust the grand duke—who is a scoundrel of the first water—too much. So he had copies made on specially tough, thin paper and rolled up in cigarettes with a little tobacco at each end. They were left at the shop in the Strand for me to fetch, for fear I might be robbed on the way to the station. It was easier to guard a few hundred yards of the

Strand than the four miles from my rooms. I carried the cigarettes in my case till we were arrested. Then I smoked them. They were not very pleasant. In fact, they nearly made me sick. When you remarked on my looks I was afraid they would suspect the dodge. That was why I was so wild.

"It had been arranged that I should try to get rid of them in this way if I was captured. The word 'compensation' in my telegram told the home authorities that I had done so. Sir Digby brought further copies in the same manner, and handed them to me under the pretense that they were samples of the local cigarettes. They overhauled his baggage three times while he was at Moran—his mention of Jackson in our conversation told me of each search—but they never thought of the cigarettes in his pocket. He little thought that I should hand them to the emperor! In a week's time we shall hand him the originals."

"You've no doubt about their giving them up?"

Daer put his hand on my arm.

"My only doubt," he said, "is what decoration the emperor will give us. He's a fine fellow! I shall be proud to receive an order from his hand."

I was proud of it, too; and I've often felt inclined to boast of it, but I feared that this would lead to inquiries how I became possessed of such an honor. So I kept it laid up in lavender till he was dead and buried, rather than imperil the secret of the emperor!

## THE OVERWORKED HUSBAND

WHILE she's dusting the billiard-chalk off of his coat,  
Her tears of sweet sympathy fall,  
As she thinks of the evenings he has to devote  
To his work—here she swallows a lump in her throat—  
At his desk by the whitewashed wall.

NIXON WATERMAN.

# THE BEGINNING OF A FRIENDSHIP

By Elizabeth Payne

THE obvious and incontestable duty demanded under the circumstances was, as Norman fully realized, to leave the table at once.

He had been sent to his room before, and he was aware that the final ignominy of his fate was probably not yet accomplished; his punishment would come on the morrow and it was likely to be severe.

He got on his feet, proudly choking back the indignant tears. Looking across at his mother, he met in her eyes the look of unfailing confidence and friendship that insensibly braced him up to the remembrance that while the assurance of her sympathy was his, the measure of her trust in him expected that he would conduct himself as became a man—and a gentleman—no matter what the provocation.

The angry retort on his lips died unspoken. He smiled at her through his tears, and holding his head high, walked out of the room.

Lemley glanced down the length of the table at the boy's mother.

She sat staring into her cup, stirring her coffee abstractedly and mechanically. Her face was pale, and Lemley could see that her lips were pressed tightly together to keep them from trembling.

He pushed back his chair irritably, and she looked up at him and smiled bravely and loyally. Whatever he did, the smile told him, would be right—must be right to her. It made him feel rather like a cad, but the black frown did not smooth itself away from his forehead nor the line of ill humor from his mouth.

He followed her into the library across the hall, where his evening paper

lay, freshly folded, beside his pipe, and his Morris chair was drawn up before the grate in readiness for him; all arranged for his comfort by her thoughtful care and loving hands—for she adored him and served him and lived for him, as some women do for some men, and he repaid her by an unceasing devotion and a depth of understanding and tender sympathy such as it is the happiness of only a few women to secure.

Elizabeth stood uncertainly before the fire. Her mother's heart was with that little lonely figure upstairs, rebelling in futile and impotent indignation against the injustice of an adversary who took unfair advantage of superior strength of position. It seemed to her that everyday matters were growing worse, and she had hoped for a result so different. Lemley had learned to love her in spite of Norman; why could he not now learn to love Norman because of her? Everybody loved Norman. He had friends all over the place. Everywhere they went, the boy won hearts; yet this one heart that represented her world remained untouched and unconvinced.

She moved restlessly across to the piano, and idly ran her fingers over the keys. Lemley liked to have her play for him while he read his paper, and she loved to sit in the warm lamplight, weaving out the harmonies that he cared for, and feeling to the full in the dreamy influence of the music the completeness of the happiness that was hers in the new and beautiful life that he had opened out for her.

But to-night her hands dropped in her lap. The boy, in his solitary vigil in the room above, must not hear in the music the suggestion that they were

happy, while he was out in the cold, forgotten.

She rose abruptly and met her husband's eyes with the sudden consciousness that he had been watching her all the time.

"I suppose," he ventured, tentatively, "that you intend to go up to him?"

Elizabeth came and stood before him, looking down at him as he lay back against the cushions of the big chair.

"No," she returned, with decision, "I shall not go up to him. If you expect me to take his part against you, Phil, you understand me less thoroughly than I hoped and believed you did, dear. It may be that I can't agree with your methods—often I don't—but the boy shall never know that I don't—only I do wish you understood each other better."

"You think I am unjust to him," persisted Lemley, thrusting argumentatively at the fire.

"Yes," she agreed, "I do. You are determined not to be friends with him. You must not be surprised, then, that he will not accept dictation from you."

"Dictation, Elizabeth! Why, the boy was insolent to me—surely, you will admit that."

She had leaned her elbow on the low mantel, and was staring moodily into the grate. A giant lump of the cannel coal fell apart under the persuasive poker, and the sudden blaze of light illumined her face as Lemley turned toward her.

"I do admit it," she returned, sadly; "but"—her voice sharpened with sudden resentment—"you bully him, Phil."

Lemley stared at her.

"Yes," she retorted, "I mean it. You bully him. You won't be friends with him. You won't let him look on you as a boy ought to look on his father, and yet you take advantage of the fact that he is dependent on you and at your mercy to tyrannize over him and to command and forbid until you are making him willful and insolent in self-defense. He knows no other way, for he has not the weapons that you have."

Elizabeth's cheeks were very red and her eyes very bright. Her husband sat

looking earnestly up at her. His paper had fallen on the rug beside him, and his pipe had gone out, neglected, in his hand. He had never heard her talk like this. He had felt that he was first in her life—he knew that he was first, for he absorbed her life in the completeness of the great love for him that filled her heart, but it came to him with sudden conviction how much this boy must be to her, the child who had been a part of that first unhappy marriage. She was pleading for the boy because he was wronged—Lemley knew that—not because she felt that he was first. She had given her husband so much; did she reproach herself that the boy, perhaps, had received less?

He leaned forward in his chair, and regarded her steadily.

"Surely," he insisted, gravely, "you believe he should be punished this time, Elizabeth? The fact that because he was fortunate enough to run the auto around the block and up to the door without an accident is no proof that he can be trusted with it. It's only by the luckiest chance in the world that the machine didn't turn down the hill at the corner and run amuck into a trolley car on Main Avenue. You know what I think of that machine, Elizabeth, and you know what orders I have given about its being used. I will not have it meddled with. If Norman deliberately disobeys my instructions, then Norman must receive some punishment that will be severe enough to make him remember another time. I am very much put out about this—you must realize that it means something to me."

He got up restlessly, and began to pace back and forth across the rug, frowning and chewing savagely at his unlit pipe. He hated to hurt her, but he believed that he was right. Yet he knew that he would not feel satisfied until he had convinced her that he was right.

Deeply as he loved her, he knew—and she knew as well—that it had made a difference—that boy of hers. Lemley had lived the care-free, independent life of the unmarried man of means, going where he would and spending his

days as his fancy dictated. It had been to him an abounding joy and satisfaction to be able to place the woman who had taken possession of his heart and his life where poverty and hardship could no longer touch her; but he was not a man who accepted responsibilities easily or lightly, and the boy had meant to him more than the acquisition of an undesired and unwelcome addition to his plan of existence. To him the child was a problem thrust upon him, to be dealt with according to his uncompromising conception of the duties of step-fatherhood. He accepted Norman's presence after deliberate reflection, unconscious, perhaps, that the very determination to be faithful to his self-imposed responsibility had prejudiced his mental attitude toward the innocent interloper in the scheme of his happiness.

He came and stood opposite her, before the fire.

"You think he ought to be punished, don't you, Elizabeth?" he questioned, anxiously.

She did not answer, but stood staring absently into the glowing coals.

"The Lord knows," he insisted, "that I don't want to be unjust to the boy. He is a good little chap in the main. Perhaps I wanted you all to myself. You can't blame me. It isn't easy for me to forget whose boy Norman is—as well as yours. I think of what you went through in those years of misery and hardship, and I—I can't forgive the boy for being here to remind you of it. I have wanted to banish it completely from your mind—I wanted to start with a clean slate."

"His school will begin next week," interrupted Elizabeth. "Then you will have me all to yourself—and I will have you, Phil."

He had drawn her down beside him, and she squeezed his throat tenderly with her round bare arm that lay across his shoulders.

"I wanted to have him go," she said, "as happy boys go, who leave home for school, feeling that his place will be vacant and waiting for him, and that he will be missed and loved and wanted while he is away from us."

Her voice choked with tears, and Lemley drew her close to him.

"It means such a lot to you, doesn't it, Betty?" he said, tenderly. "Don't cry, dear; that's the last thing I want to make you do. I'd almost rather spoil the boy into a petted idler like his father, than to cause you tears. But you know you said you would trust me, and I ought to know something about boys—more than you—ought I not?"

He turned and smiled into her eyes, and Elizabeth smiled back at him through her tears in loving loyalty. She leaned against his shoulder, and thus they sat in silence while the clock ticked away the moments in an insistent monotony of contentment, and the dying fire glowed across the quiet of the cozy room.

Still, Elizabeth was not satisfied. Accustomed as she was to yielding to Lemley's judgment; which, in truth, she found almost invariably far superior to her own in that it was impelled by reason rather than sentiment, her love for the boy—overshadowed as it undoubtedly had been by the greater love that absorbed her consciousness—to-night had been stirred into unwonted assertiveness, her instinct of motherhood rising in indignant protest at an injustice to the child. As she leaned against her husband's shoulder her gentle mouth straightened into a line of obstinacy.

"You are going to punish him?" questioned she.

"You admit, don't you, Elizabeth, that he deserves punishment?"

"How are you going to punish him?" persisted she, in a low voice.

"I think," returned Lemley, judicially, "that he will have to give up his tennis to-morrow."

Elizabeth sprang to her feet.

"Oh, Phil," she cried, "not the tournament that he has been working for—why, it will break his heart! He is sure to win. He is the best player of them all. Oh, Phil!"

She stood with clasped hands and imploring eyes, gazing into his face. In fact, she scarcely believed that Lemley meant seriously what he had said.

But his tone was implacable.

"Norman has been exceedingly disobedient, Elizabeth. He must be punished, and he must be punished severely. This tennis game is something he really cares about, something which will make him remember the lesson. He *must* obey me—not for my sake or the sake of any paltry auto, but for his own sake, and you know it. You said"—reproachfully—"that you would trust me."

She glanced up and met his eyes that challenged her love for him and her confidence in his judgment. She shook her head wearily, and walking slowly from the room, went sadly up the stairs.

Later she crept down the hall in her dressing gown to look at Norman as he slept. She held a lighted candle in her hand, and shaded the light carefully from the boy's eyes as she leaned tenderly and anxiously above him.

The child was sleeping quietly, but around his young mouth there was a look of hardness that cut his mother to the heart.

Why could not these two be friends? They were both the dearest people in the world to her, and yet they both made her miserable every day of their lives together. Everything seemed to be going wrong. Was it her fault? Had she been neglectful? Had she perhaps lost sight of the privilege of motherhood in the awakening realization of happy wifehood? Had she begun wrong? Gazing down at the sleeping boy a sudden recollection came to her of the day of her marriage to Lemley.

Through the haze that always seemed to surround the memory of that time of the consummation of her happiness, making it seem in perspective as it had been at the moment—like a dream through which she moved, a dream intangible, ineffable—one incident stood out in sharp and antagonistic distinctness. Norman, his small, earnest face aglow with genial good-fellowship, had approached and shyly placed a friendly hand in Lemley's. His mother had belonged so completely to him; now he must share her with the other, but he could be generous.

Elizabeth had stooped and flung her arms around the child, exclaiming, in happy remonstrance:

"But you have given him your *left* hand, Phil!"

Norman, drawing back, had looked up into Lemley's face unsmilingly.

"He means the left hand, mother," he said, uncompromisingly. "He feels like that—it will always be his left hand for me."

And somehow, for the moment, it had seemed almost to spoil the day.

Norman heard his fate, the next morning, in silence. He stood, cap in hand, before his stepfather's desk in the library and stared, white-faced, out of the window, while he listened apathetically to a well-meant and pertinent dissertation on the advantages—mental, moral, psychological and material—of obedience.

When Lemley had concluded the boy brought his gaze back slowly from the waving tree tops, and fixed his eyes, impenetrable and indomitable, upon the man's face.

"May I go now?" he asked, with a certain dignity that cut into Lemley's consciousness, already harassed by a poignant self-reproach.

"Norman," he exclaimed, impulsively, as the boy opened the door to go out, "you hate me, don't you?"

The child turned, and looked at him with clear, accusing eyes.

"No," he returned, quietly, "I do not hate you—I despise you!" He came back and looked defiantly at Lemley. "Please do not think that I obey you because you have any right to make me. I do it for mother's sake, because I know she wants me to." Still respectfully holding his cap in his hand, he went out, carefully closing the door behind him.

His bicycle stood on the lawn, leaning against the railing of the veranda. He threw himself across the saddle and rode rapidly away from the town and out into the open country. He rode recklessly, with flushed cheeks and bright, excited eyes, and his boyish mouth shut in a thin, determined line.

Far beyond the utmost limits of the little village, and past the clump of woods which separated it from the fields beyond, he flung himself from his wheel at the foot of a long hill, where the road turned sharply at right angles and wound steeply upward.

He leaned his machine against some bars at the opposite side of the road, and, swinging over, climbed to the top of the slope of meadowland. Here he threw himself down in the grass which, ripe for the cutting, waved waist-deep about him.

He sat for a long hour, his hands clasped around his knees and his eyes fixed on the shadows that lay, blue and transparent, across the distant hills. The tinkle of a cow bell somewhere in the pasture behind him, the insistent ripple of a waterfall in the brook below, the droning, sustained call of a locust across the drowsy stillness, and all the homely, peaceful sounds of the sweet summer day penetrated his rebellious mood and had their insensible and inevitable effect of calm upon his turbulent young spirit.

"For mother's sake;" was it not the watchword that had been the inspiration of all his short life? The care of her—the thought for her—the sympathy and tenderness for her, because of her womanhood and her helplessness in the hard places in which her feet had been set.

He knew how best he could help her; they had so often talked it over together, and he knew, too, how hard he had tried—but, oh, for the days when they two had been alone together, when he was first and the whole world was shut out from the little kingdom in which she lived for him!

Norman knew that this was selfishness, and that selfishness had no place in her life. He realized, too, with honest thanksgiving, how much happier she was now, how much more sheltered, how much wider and finer was her life. No more hours of toil, no more weary days and anxious, wakeful nights, spent in terror of the inevitable and dreaded reckonings of the morrow; but comfort and beautiful things, and peace—and in her eyes that deepening of

happiness, which Norman could see, but not even dimly comprehend, at the coming of that other whom they had taken into their kingdom. The only flaw—the only rift in the completeness of her happiness—Norman felt, remorsefully, came to her through himself, wretched boy that he was.

He kicked savagely at a clump of daisies that grew among the grasses at his feet. Leaning forward, he pulled them up by the roots and flung them away from him. His idle glance, following them, was attracted toward the dusty stretch of road winding over the hills into the hot distance.

Suddenly he sat up straight and held his breath, peering across the hollow and upward at the long hill in front of him. The road curved at the bars and stretched up over the hill, a straight and tedious mile of steady climbing. At the foot, and just at the turn, were the bars which led into the field of sloping meadowland where, petrified, Norman now sat.

Down the hill, a red flash swallowed in a cloud of yellow dust—zigzagging madly from side to side, swinging perilously on two wheels, righting itself, jolting over pebbles that threatened imminent destruction—came a heavy automobile with the speed and the roar of a tornado.

Norman drew in his breath sharply. He knew the lines of the car, and the color. It was his stepfather's auto, and it was running away!

Like a flash the thought penetrated the boy's half-paralyzed consciousness—the bars must be let down. There was the chance, just the one possible chance, that the ponderous machine, if it held to its course, might plunge through the opening and climb through the thick grass to safety. If not, it would certainly dash against the stone wall, to the inevitable destruction of itself and its unfortunate owner.

As Norman flung himself down the slope he was not conscious of thought, but afterward he remembered that there had hovered somewhere before him a vision of his mother's face with the look that he knew she would wear if Lem-

ley were killed. If he had any definite purpose in his mad impulse to reach the bars, it was not the impulse to save the man, but to save *her*, whose life he knew the other was.

Dimplly he realized that the white-faced man in the automobile which thundered toward him had divined his purpose and was standing up in the lurching machine, frantically shouting to him to get back and out of danger. But Norman, with a face as white and with all his boy's resolve showing in his steady eyes and tense little hands, flung himself at the bars.

The top rail came off and was thrown far beyond and to one side. The second rail caught in a crevice of the stone wall and became momentarily wedged. The tears started from Norman's eyes. His lips moved in passionate appeal. The roar of the approaching automobile, now near the bottom of the hill, thundered in his ears and the yellow dust snarled and stung and almost stifled him. The second rail came off with a wrench.

Norman had dislodged the third rail, and was holding it in his hands when the automobile left the road, plunged across the intervening strip of turf, and rolling straight through the opening prepared for it, panted heavily up the steep slope, and came harmlessly to a halt in the heavy grass. Here it stood snorting defiantly at this uncalled-for interference in its unquestioned prerogative for eccentric behavior; then, with a last mighty roar of expostulation, it leaped into the air and turned on its side, where for a moment its wheels revolved madly in a final contortion and were still.

Long before the machine had come to a standstill, Lemley had leaped to the ground and half ran, half rolled to the bottom of the slope, where, white and motionless, the boy lay; the heavy rail, snapped in two, pressing his slim body against the wall. The man knelt beside the still little form and lifting it in his shaking arms, laid it tenderly down on the soft grass, straightening out the slender limbs and smoothing back the wavy dark hair.

"My little hero!" Lemley whispered, chokingly. "My poor little hero!" And it was these words that drifted across Norman's wavering consciousness as he opened his eyes and met Lemley's anxious gaze.

"I did it—because she would have—cared—so much," he explained, and closing his eyes let his head sink back again against the friendly shoulder.

Norman, established in state, in the middle of his mother's beautiful brass bed, his arm neatly bandaged and his countenance carefully court-plastered, was sitting up and cheerfully partaking of toast and milk. He looked up as Lemley came in and smiled at him in a friendly way.

Lemley came and stood beside the bed, looking down at its battered little occupant with tender solicitude. The sun setting redly over the hills threw slanting beams across the child's face, white and earnest, and the man's, grave and questioning.

"Norman," Lemley began haltingly, "there is a great deal I want to say to you, but you are very tired (they told me how brave you were when your arm was set) and I have strict orders not to stay more than two minutes. I will just say this: Will you begin all over again, dear old chap, and let me show you how much—how much I am going to try and be to you? Will you shake hands, Norman?"

"Why, sure!" said Norman, generously. He balanced the tray carefully on his lap and extended his uninjured arm with frank cordiality.

He looked up and smiled inquiringly at his stepfather.

"It is the right hand this time, isn't it?" he asked.

Lemley clasped the hot little hand in both his own.

"The right hand, now—and always, Norman," he said with a curious little break in his voice. "It is the beginning of our friendship, if you are willing. Are you?"

"Why, sure," responded Norman, happily.

# THE MAJOR'S DAY

By A. F. Stevens

MAJOR HORACE DE GREY honored with his presence a select boarding house, where the refinements of life were more considered than the coarser creature comforts.

"Taste before appetite," was Miss Griggs' motto, and her soft, appealing manners almost persuaded her remunerative family that the sprigged breakfast china was more satisfying than meat and potatoes.

Her father, the late lamented Gov. Griggs, of Georgia, had fancied a few strips of dry toast, a little liver and bacon, an egg *à la coque*, and she knew her guests would respect her traditions.

Miss Griggs sat at the head of her table, and made the tea and coffee with her own hands. She was near-sighted and fumbled, but she had a look in her faded blue eyes at once innocent and deprecating, that made the hungriest breakfaster await with patience his allotted portion.

Decayed gentlewoman was stamped on Miss Griggs' meek countenance; it sounded in the cadence of her subdued tones; it was certified by the other decayed ladies and gentlemen—or descendants of such—who thronged her house.

Miss Griggs disseminated the morning news with the teacups. She was always down first, and had a glance at the paper. She took the *Times*—it was cheap—moral—excellent.

"I see," she said, as she handed young Bates his coffee, "that poor Mr. Flatt is to be buried to-day."

Bates grinned and turned to his friend, Spindle, who sat next, and was opening his third stale egg. Bates seemed out of place in Miss Griggs' collection of cracked porcelain—he was

sound, common earthenware; too common to know he was common.

"What d'yer bet," he asked, "that the major will be going to that funeral? He don't seem to have many friends among the living, but once they're dead, I tell you, he was thick with them."

"No more dissipations of that sort for the major!" laughed Spindle, wiping his small mustache. "He caught the tail of his black frock coat in the pew door at Mrs. Knickerbocker's funeral last week, and it's past praying for."

"Hush!" said Miss Griggs, reprovingly, as the door opened, and a small woman came briskly in.

She might have been the personification of worry—so deep was the line between the brows—but she was extremely alert, and the glance that met yours still flashed courage. That she had heard Spindle's speech was more than probable, for there was a flush on her cheek that made her worn face almost youthful.

"I must ask you to send the major's coffee to his room," she said, to Miss Griggs. "He has an early engagement this morning, and has been unavoidably detained in his dressing."

Bates raised his eyebrows at Spindle. Was the major safety-pinning his coat tails?

"Must you shop this bitter day, Mrs. de Grey?" asked gentle Miss Griggs.

"If I'm to pay for this cup of coffee and similar favors," answered the worried lady, with a grim smile.

Miss Griggs sighed; keeping a boarding house was grinding, but professional shopping was a still harder task to take up at the end of a disappointing life.

Common sense and taste were the only

assets left to poor Mrs. de Grey in the wreck of the major's fortune, and she found, by placing them at the disposal of a large circle of Western friends, that she could keep herself and her husband in moderate comfort on the commissions allowed by the shops.

The word *wreck* was used unadvisedly. The major's fortune was not wrecked; it had been gradually melting from the day, when at the close of the Civil War, he—a dashing young officer—had married pretty Almira Morgan, of Chicago, and brought her to New York to dazzle that gay town with her beauty, and to be dazzled in turn by her husband's popularity, his pleasant position and distinguished connections.

Life began with luxurious settings, and the major felt his worth was but properly sustained by such surroundings; indeed, he was so sure that fortune would never dare play pranks with a gentleman of his standing, that a yearly diminishing bank account only served to develop the Micawber in his disposition. Even now, when his wife's small earnings stood between him and the poorhouse, he was still the gallant officer, ready by a sudden dash to recapture the lost dollars.

The morning mail brought Mrs. de Gray many letters with samples pinned to them. She studied them with knit brows while she drank her coffee, and, gathering them up, left the room before Bates and Spindle had disposed of their liver and bacon.

"She is worth a dozen of the major," said Bates, as she shut the door.

"That depends upon your fancy," replied Spindle, who was imaginative. "Whether you prefer the hack to the superannuated race horse. I think the major is typically fine. He cannot dig—to beg he is ashamed, and so he lets his wife support him till fortune smiles again."

"He's an old snob," said Bates, "always trotting out his lost possessions and acquaintances to impress us."

"Perhaps he finds it pleasanter to live in the past than the present," Miss Griggs remarked, with a quaver in her voice.

"What they squandered in the past would keep them in comfort now, I guess," sneered Bates.

"They would be all right if the major could sell his property on the river?" said Spindle.

"Has he taken you in with that old story?" Bates answered, contemptuously. "Mrs. de Grey says it isn't worth the back taxes, and only serves to delude the major with the idea that he still may be rich."

"The major would never have made such a speech about her," said Spindle. "He is too loyal."

While this conversation went on, Mrs. de Grey had mounted three flights of stairs, and knocked at a bedroom door. It was the room she shared with the major, but he valued ceremony.

Maj. de Grey was doing his back part almost to the splitting of hairs. He had on his black trousers, while the frock coat, neatly darned, hung in high-shouldered limpness over the back of a convenient chair. In that gentleman's scheme of harmony, sad garments befitted sad occasions. He was vain of his opinions, and they soon hardened into cast-iron rules. His features plainly portrayed his character; they were high and bony; his eyes kind, but unintelligent, his mouth concealed by a huge mustache, and his chin obstinate.

"Horace," said his wife, "if I leave you a check will you cash it and pay these bills? It must be done to-day."

"Then you had better attend to it yourself," the major answered. "I am going to Flatt's funeral, and I may go out to the grave."

She looked at him sarcastically.

"You were never intimate with Mr. Flatt," she remonstrated.

"I should think not!" retorted the major. "His grandfather was coachman to mine! However, for that very reason I wish to go to his funeral. I do not wish them to think me proud. He was quite a remarkable man, considering his origin."

"He made something of his life," she said, wearily, as she wrote her check.

"Gad! how times are changed!" exclaimed the major. "I can remember

Flatt coming to me to ask me to get him a place in a downtown bank, and he was so embarrassed that he sat on his hat. Now he dies a millionaire a dozen times over, and the head of as many companies to boot. All luck."

"Some people would call it character," she suggested.

"Character be damned!" said the major. "It's push and luck. I suppose all New York will be at the funeral."

"Horace"—timidly—"I wish you wouldn't go to so many funerals. I think it is making you slightly ridiculous."

The major's dull eyes flashed.

"Is this your own opinion, or are you, woman-like, parrot-like, quoting other people's? However, it doesn't matter; you must allow me to know better than you; to be the judge of my own conduct. I have unfortunately come to an age and condition when it is the only compliment I have it in my power to pay my friends, and—I intend to pay it!"

His dignity was oppressive. Mrs. de Grey put on her bonnet and shabby coat, and went shopping.

The major put on his seal ring—it bore the arms of the De Greys, and their well-known motto, "*Le bon temps viendra*"—and dropping his watch into his waistcoat pocket, he struggled into his frock coat and left the room.

Punctuality was one of the major's minor virtues. He arrived at Trinity Chapel in the very nick of time, as the last flowers were set in place, and as the pallbearers were being received and taken to the vestry room.

There had been a disappointment in one pallbearer. Judge Delancey Washington had a sudden seizure, which obliged him to give out at the last moment, and the town had been searched for a substitute worthy of the distinguished band already secured. The undertaker was therefore ignorant of the family's choice for the eighth pallbearer, and indeed did not even know whether they had found anyone at all. However, when his eye lit upon the major in his funeral garb, he made sure this was the substitute, and felt the re-

lief of the true artist in a secured symmetry of effect. He bore down upon Maj. de Grey with a little group of reporters behind him.

"You are a pallbearer, sir?" said the undertaker, with the question note subdued to a funeral whisper.

The major, thinking he was asserting a fact, politely acquiesced in what he supposed the wish of the family. "If they want me," he answered.

"They want you badly, sir," said the undertaker, thinking of the scenic effect marred by one unmated pallbearer.

"Ask his name," whispered the reporters, and "Maj. Horace de Grey" was scribbled on half a dozen pads, while the major, with his head in the air and a back of pride, was led to the vestry room.

Mrs. Flatt was old-fashioned; she liked time-honored ceremonials, and scarfs of linen with black rosettes had been prepared for the eight gentlemen whose friendship honored her husband even in death.

When they emerged from the vestry room to walk down the side aisle to meet the coffin, the major and a statesman of world-wide fame led the procession, and of the two, the major was by far the more impressive.

Our old friends forget us in poverty, but their memories sometimes attach a name to us on occasions, and it happened that the major had an acquaintance among the pallbearers, who exchanged a word with him, and completed his contentment. The service was, in his opinion, all too brief for the packed multitude in the church to observe him, as he sat in state with the seven most influential men of the land. He rehearsed in his own mind how he would crush Almira with an account of his importance, how he had waived ceremony in accepting the belated invitation, how willing he had been to ignore empty social distinctions in the presence of the great leveler, death—and all the time he was bursting with gratified pride; for twenty long years he had sighed for some such recognition. Almira was offering an imaginary apology for her rude comments upon

his conduct, when the swell of the boys' voices recalled him to the duties of the moment. The recessional hymn was in progress, and once more the coffin had to be escorted—this time down the aisle—and the major and the statesman fell in line.

"Are you going out in the train to Sleepy Nook?" asked the statesman.

The major inclined his head, and then added, graciously: "I am a man of leisure, and I wish to pay every respect."

"I wish I were," said the statesman; "I begrudge every second, but I suppose I must go."

The drive to Forty-second Street confirmed the statesman's impression of Maj. de Grey's distinction—he only wondered that he had never met him before. At the train he stepped back to let the elder gentleman precede him, and the major seated himself in the private funeral car, choosing a left-hand window, so that when they made the turn from the Harlem to the Hudson he could look across to the New Jersey shore, and see (a few miles to the south) his small tract of water front lying between the Palisades and the waters of the river. The sense of proprietorship, even if tax-bound, was agreeable.

Now, young Flatt, a Yale boy, who had been summoned home for this melancholy occasion, knew his father's friends only by reputation, and was so afraid of attaching the wrong name to the individual addressed that in his efforts to say a few civil words to each as they sped along, he was careful to make his little speeches quite impersonal.

"So kind of you to come," he said, to the major. "My mother wished me to thank you in her name, and to express her regrets that her utter prostration prevents her going out with us to-day."

"Don't mention it, my boy," said the major, kindly. "Your mother went back to old times when she asked me to pay this last respect to your father's memory. Why, I knew him when he was a boy."

Here the great man joined them, to ask a nervous question about the hour of their return; it was imperative that

he should catch an afternoon train to Washington.

"Shall we be in town in time for me to get a bit of lunch, and pick up my luggage at the hotel?" he asked.

"Lunch will be served in the car on our return trip," young Flatt answered, and the major's inner man felt bland.

Flatt, senior, was left in the receiving vault of Sleepy Nook to await the resurrection of the spring, and the party of lively mortals who had seen him so far on his journey scampered back to their comfortable car through the biting cold, feeling by contrast to him a surge of vitality flooding their veins.

The train was once more in motion. Servants provided by a celebrated caterer moved noiselessly through the car, depositing first napkins on the mourning laps, then plates, then sandwiches of cunning varieties, and lastly, champagne or whisky and soda—according to the weight of grief to be assuaged. The major's eyes twinkled, he wouldn't have missed this funeral for a farm. He and the statesman bowed to each other over the first bumper.

"Your health, sir," they mutually murmured.

"Admirable sandwiches," said the great man, "I hope you happened on one of chicken and tongue with mayonaise."

"*Pâté de foie gras*," said the major, with his mouth full.

"Champagne?" said the servant, and the glasses were refilled.

"Noble river!" said the major, with emotion.

"Noblest in the world!" responded the great man, who saw it expanding at Haverstraw.

"It isn't much beautified by those chemical works," said the major, pointing across to some long, low buildings with tall chimneys emitting a black smoke.

The great man sat up as if stiffened by a new idea, and turned a calculating eye on the chemical works.

"I'm on the lookout for a piece of river front for a glue concern I'm interested in," he said, to De Grey, "but

all the property on this side of the river is bringing prices beyond us. We are hunted from place to place as a nuisance, and we have determined now to buy in the neighborhood of New York as a speculation against our next upheaval. If we have to move, we must move from a property which has risen on our hands."

"I have the very place for you," almost burst from the lips of the major; but a gentleman-like reticence forbade his bringing business into the social harmony of a funeral feast, and for the moment he felt the superior of a statesman with a glue factory.

The major took his third glass. The statesman stood at two.

The major's sense of reticence became slightly relaxed, and as they approached the curve at Spuyten Duyvil, he shook his finger at the Palisades. At long distances factories were built at their foot, but between these excrescences the river lapped the shore almost as undisturbed as when its great name-giver first explored its windings.

The major sighed.

"We have been passing through a continuous village from Tarrytown down," he said, sadly, "and over there, on the Jersey side, property is as dead as Flatt!"

"Are you interested in it?" asked the great man.

"Interested!" echoed the major, "I should think I was! I own a quarter of a mile of river front just by Sunnyside, that is slowly eating itself up with riparian taxes."

"To be sure!" said the statesman, "I had forgotten that in New Jersey you have riparian commissioners, and you own your water front, subject to a State tax. That must be pretty severe on unproductive property; what does it cost you a year?"

"I don't pay it, sir!" roared the major. "I deny their right to impose it; but when I sell the property I may have to settle with them for the sake of the title."

"What would you sell for?" asked the great man.

"Very little," said the major.

"A hundred a running foot?" hazarded the great man.

"I'm not giving it away," said the major, irritably.

"How would a hundred and fifty strike you?" asked the great man.

"It wouldn't strike me at all," said the major.

"What do the taxes amount to?" said the great man.

The major drew himself up at this prying question. He was majestic as he turned his countenance fully on his interlocutor.

"Are we talking business?" he asked.

The great man hummed and ha'ed.

"It isn't exactly talking business to ask a man his bottom price for a piece of property he has just said he wanted to get rid of."

The major looked shrewd. "I'll sell," he said, "for two hundred dollars a foot, and attend myself to the taxes, and if you want me to put it in writing I will do so. Here is my card; you can easily find me."

They were entering the tunnel, and young Flatt put an end to the conversation by stopping to say a word of farewell.

At the end of the day the Flatt family felt calm enough to enjoy the accounts of the funeral in the evening papers.

"Mother," said young Flatt, "who is Maj. Horace de Grey? He seemed awfully fond of father."

"I never heard of him in my life," sighed the widow.

"You must be mistaken," said the boy, "he was a pallbearer."

"The reporters have made one of their usual stupid blunders," said poor Mrs. Flatt, and dismissed the question forever.

But the major had reason to hold the Flatt funeral in tender memory for many a day; in fact, until that final one when he joined his old acquaintance on the Styxian shore; for within two months the great man's glue had flowed into the major's pockets in a golden stream, and he and his Almira began life over again.

# LITTLE DINNERS WITH THE SPHINX

By Richard Le Gallienne

Author of "The Quest of the Golden Girl," "Prose Fancies," "The Life Romantic," Etc.

## I.

### ON THE WEARING OF OPALS.

"HOW sad your eyes are to-night!" I said to the Sphinx a few evenings ago.

"Are they?" she smiled. "But then you know we are never so sad as our eyes."

"Are you quite sure there is nothing wrong?" I asked.

"Perfectly. I expect I have been looking too long at my opals."

After a moment she added:

"I so often think of what you said about sorrows being the opals of the soul."

"Fancy your remembering that!" said I with mock modesty.

"It is strange," the Sphinx went on, "how sorrow continues to be associated with the opal."

"I have often marveled at your courage in wearing so many. They gleam on your fingers like a whole armory of sorrow."

"Is there any danger a woman wouldn't dare for beauty's sake? And in spite of the superstition, they are more fashionable than ever. Yet I don't think there is a woman who wears them who does not feel in her heart that she is living under the rainbow of some beautiful doom, some romantic menace. Some day the genius of the stone will touch her heart, with its wand of sorrow, and her face will suddenly become like one of her rings, mysteriously lit with pathos."

"I believe," said I, "that it is on that very account that women wear them. It is the legend of the stone that attracts them almost more than its beauty. It has for them something of the attraction of sorcery, and suggests a commerce with those occult influences which in spite of ourselves we involuntarily think of as ruling the romantic side of our lives. There is just a spice of magic about all precious stones, and as in the old fairy tales a certain ring was supposed to give control over unseen powers, so even yet we unconsciously, or consciously, continue to attach superstitious significance to the wearing of a ring."

"That is true," said the Sphinx, "and any woman who wears rings with art, and not merely for indiscriminate display, sets a new ring on her finger with a certain thoughtfulness, if not hesitation. If it does not already mean something to her, it is going to mean something—and what will that meaning be! A ring that means nothing to one, however beautiful, hardly seems to belong to us. A ring is a personal possession or nothing—except diamonds," the Sphinx added, laughing, some particularly fine diamonds glittering at her throat; "diamonds are like one's carriage—a part of one's *entourage*."

"They are the Three-per-Cents of Romance," said I.

"Yes; one wears diamonds as one wears shoes. They mean nothing to one individually. They are social stones, even democratic. They are impervious to association. They are like

the sun—every one loves sunlight, but no one has ever thought of sentimentally annexing the sun. The sun is not romantic. It is a wholesome, prosperous presence in our lives, but it is impossible to think of it as personally related to ourselves—whereas the moon, on the other hand, means just 'us' and no one else in the world, to every romantic eye that looks up to it. The diamond is the sun of precious stones, the opal is the moon."

"But what of the pearl?"

"The pearl is the Evening Star."

"Tell me," I said, "if I may ask, do your opals stand for sorrows gone by or for sorrows to come?"

"You mustn't be so literal," she answered, "one can hardly label one's sorrows like that. Sorrow is temperamental, not accidental; it is attitude rather than history; it comes even more from within than from without. Some natures attract it—as the moon draws the sea. When I speak of my sorrows I do not mean my personal history—did you think my opals stood for so many disappointments?"

She laughed disdainfully.

"No," she continued, "few of us, alas! are real enough to achieve the distinction of a great sorrow. A great sorrow is as rare as a great work of art. To know a really beautiful sorrow of our own, one needs to have a tragic simplicity of nature which belongs only to a few chosen temperaments; and if, indeed, a beautiful sorrow should come into our lives, who knows but that we should miss its beauty in its pain! Just as we have musicians to make our music for us, we have to rely on others for our sorrows."

"It is strange how much more distinguished sorrow is than joy," said I.

"Yes; and yet I suppose it is a part of what, resist it as we may, seems to be the natural law of renunciation. The weak nature may be crushed and lowered by renunciation, but the strong nature seems to be mysteriously refined. Perhaps, indeed, it is scarcely correct to speak of a weak nature renouncing. Things are taken from it rather than renounced. Renunciation implies will,

and the exercise of strength. And thus to be able to do without implies an individual greatness and sufficiency from the beginning. We probably never renounce anything that we really need. Whatever the reason, however, there is no doubt that, as you say, the world is conscious of a certain distinction, and even romantic beauty attaching to sorrow which it does not associate with joy. Sorrow seems to imply a certain initiation into the arcana of human experience, a certain direct relation with the regent powers of our destiny, august and hidden, and only revealing their supernatural faces to this and that mortal here and there, henceforth stricken, and, so to say, 'enchanted' as one touched by the sacred lightning and yet alive among men."

"I suspect," said I, "that that is what, in a dim and trivial way, people mean when they speak of So-and-So looking 'interesting'—because they look sad or even only ill."

"No doubt. And, curious as it may sound, I don't think we are ever quite satisfied with happiness—not, at all events, till we have known sorrow. Till then, in our happiest hours, we seem to be unconsciously waiting for sorrow. Perhaps that is because we instinctively feel that the rarest forms of joy can only be ours on the conditions of sorrow. Intense, complete joy is only possible to the sorrowful temperament, to the nature sensitive to the sorrow that lives in all beautiful things."

"To the opal temperament," said I. The Sphinx smiled and continued:

"There again is another mystery. Why does sadness seem to lie at the heart of all beauty? Truth and Beauty seem indeed to be one in sadness. All the rarest types of beauty have something sad about them, some tragic look, or enigmatic wistfulness of expression, at the least a touch of loneliness. The gayest music can never be quite happy. Indeed, one might almost say that two qualities only are necessary to the highest beauty—strangeness and sadness, perhaps we might say only one and call it world-strangeness; a look of another world than ours, a look of spiritual

exile. Perhaps there is the secret of beauty—sadness. Beauty is an exile in this world, a fallen spirit, and, whatever her embodiment, be it a face, a flower, or a gem, it carries with it always its look of exile."

"Thus, again," said I, smiling, "we see why opals are more beautiful than diamonds. The diamond is the stone of this world. It has the prosperous, contented look of that brilliant, unmysterious happiness which comes of good health and a bank account. There is no sadness at the cold heart of the diamond—just as there is no sadness in this glass of champagne, and therefore no appeal to the imagination, as with the sad distinguished wines. I doubt if people who wear opals should drink champagne."

"Ah! but you see I wear diamonds, too," laughed the Sphinx.

"Yes, there you are. Always the best of both worlds."

"True," said the Sphinx sadly, "but the best is only in one of them."

"Truthfully now," I asked. "Are you quite sure in which?"

The Sphinx refused to commit herself, but "My opals know," she answered, musingly turning them to the light.

## II.

### NEW LOVES FOR OLD.

"How is it," said the Sphinx one evening, "that you never bring a poem with you to dinner nowadays? Have you quite given up writing them?"

"Almost," I answered.

"But you shouldn't. It is lazy of you."

"I suppose," said I, "it is a kind of laziness—but I hardly think it is voluntary, or much under my control. In many ways I grow more active and industrious as I grow older. I do more work and I work more regularly. The laziness is certainly neither mental or physical. It is rather emotional—yes! a laziness of the emotional faculties."

"You cannot mean that you have stopped falling in love?"

"I'm inclined to think I have," I laughed; "but that, like the poetry, is only one expression of the laziness I mean. Generally, while, as I say, I am less lazy in doing than of old, and while, as doctors would say, my mental faculties are active and unimpaired, I grow more and more lazy in feeling."

"Tell me some more."

"Well, I mean that, while my brain grows year by year more catholic in its sympathies, and sees more clearly all the time, opportunities of feeling old and new, my heart and senses seem less and less inclined to second it with any energy of enthusiasm or excitement. The beauty of the world, for example, never seemed more beautiful to me than it does now. I can see far more beauty in it than I could when I was a boy, appreciate far more its infinite variety; nor has it lost in wonder, or mystery or holiness. All this I see, and thankfully accept—but it is seldom that I am set in a fine glow, or that I fall into a dream about it. My appreciation of it is no longer rapture. Yes, I have lost rapture."

"Poor old thing!" laughed the Sphinx derisively; "but go on."

"Laugh," said I, "but it's all too true. Take another illustration: Some noble cause, some ghastly wrong, some agonizing disaster. Never has my imagination been more alive to such appeals; never have they stirred me to greater aspiration, indignation or pity—mentally. But while my perceptive, imaginative side is thus more active than ever, it seems unable to set going the motive forces of feeling, as it used to do. It were as if I should say 'Oh yes! indeed, I see it all—but I'll feel about it to-morrow.' Something underneath seems to say: 'What is the use of being excited about it—of taking fire. It's noble, it's monstrous, it's pitiful—but what's the use!—feeling won't help.' To think how inspired, how savage, how wrought I should have been once—use or no use! But now——"

"Tell me about falling in love," interrupted the Sphinx, quizzically. "How does this sad state of things affect that?"

"In just the same way. I see a beautiful face, or come in contact with some romantic personality. I say to myself: 'How wonderful she is! I could spend my life looking into those strange eyes, and I am old enough to know that I should never want to look into any others.' I say to myself: 'I think I have but to set my heart on it, and that woman and I might make life a fairy tale for each other!' But I raise no hand. I am content to see the possibility, content to admire the opportunity, content to see it pass. I am too lazy even for romance."

"And so you write no more poems?"

"Yes—or very staid ones. As it happens I have brought you one to-night, which you will see is very evidently inspired by the muse of middle-age. It has an unexceptionable moral; and is entitled 'New Loves for Old.' Shall I read it?"

"Go on," said the Sphinx, and I proceeded to read the following:

"'New Loves for Old!' I heard a peddler cry,  
 'New Loves for Old!' as down the street  
 he passed,  
 And from each door I noted with a sigh  
 How all the people ran at once to buy—  
 Bringing in hand the dimmed old loves  
 that last.

"'New Loves for Old!' O wondrous fair  
 and bright  
 Seem the new loves against the loves  
 grown old,  
 So flower-fresh and dewy with delight,  
 And burning as with supernatural light—  
 Ah yes! the rest were tinsel—this is  
 gold!"

"'New Loves for Old!' the peddler went his  
 way—  
 Night fell, then in my window the  
 bright spark  
 Of my old love gave out its constant ray.  
 'How burn the new loves that they bought  
 to-day?'  
 But all the other windows remained  
 dark."

"Do you mean it? Is it true?" asked the Sphinx when I had finished.

"Those are nice questions for a philosopher to ask!" I laughed. "Of course, it is true for some people, true of some lives, and for those I mean it."

"But what is your own personal feeling in the matter?"

"I hardly know if I have any personal feeling about it."

"But you wrote the poem. Why did you write it then?"

"One doesn't write poems for oneself. One writes them for others. Poetry is addressed, like certain legal proclamations, to all whom it concerns. Do you remember those lines of Straton's in the Greek Anthology:

"Love-songs I write for him and her,  
 Now this, now that, as Love dictates;  
 One birthday gift alone the Fates  
 Gave me, to be Love's Scrivener."

"Of course, this is not the whole truth about the artist, but it is a good deal of it. In a sense the artist is the most unselfish of human beings, for his whole life is living for, and feeling for, others. The more lives and the more various he can live, the greater number and diversity of his feelings, the greater his art. This many-mooded nature leads those who misunderstand his function frequently to cry out that he is insincere. The fact being that he is so sincere in so many different ways that to hasty observers his imaginative sympathy has the look of inconsistency."

"But come now, you needn't pretend to be so superior to our common human nature as all that! If you yourself had to choose between one of your dimmed old loves that last, and one of the peddler's brilliant novelties, which would you choose?"

"It would depend who I was at the moment."

"Oh, nonsense—be serious."

"But I am. It would depend, at all events, on what kind of love I feel most in need of at the moment—one's needs are so different from day to day. Old loves give us certain satisfactions, and new loves give us certain other satisfactions."

"Well, tell me what those different satisfactions are."

"Old Love brings you the sense of security, of shelter, of peace; it has the warm-house charm of kindly long-

known things, the beauty of beautiful habit, the numbers and the authority of religion. In fact it has all that belongs to the word 'old' used in the laudatory sense. Its value is the value of the known—whereas the value of new love is largely the value of the unknown."

"You mean that the value of new love lies largely in its newness."

"Certainly. Mere novelty, as the world admits on every hand, has real value; the value of refreshment, at least. In fact, novelty is the truest friend of old feeling, as it makes us feel the old feelings over again—which might hard-

ly happen without its assistance. Besides, love is even more an imaginative than an emotional need, and the new love speaks to the imagination. Love needs wonder to live on quite as much as secure affection. The new love appeals to one's sense of strangeness, one's spirit of adventure. As we stand silent upon that peak in Darien—who knows, we say to our hushed expectant hearts, who knows but that this is Eldorado at last."

"We only say that when the old was not Eldorado," put in the Sphinx.

"Oh, of course!" I admitted hastily.



## THE STORM

**N**IIGHT, and the birds drift nestward  
Havening fast;  
Night, and the wind, swift westward  
Hurls blast on blast.

Night, and the star eyes glisten  
Widened with fear.  
The clouds huddle, hushed to listen,  
The storm is near!

Night, and the waves are gripping  
The rocks in vain;  
And the savage lightning ripping  
The dark in twain.

Night, and a sudden quaking  
Seizes the trees;  
And a demon of fury waking  
Lashes the seas!

A lily is crushed in its sleeping  
And left to die;  
And into a passion of weeping  
Bursteth the sky.

Night, and my heart's wild wonder  
Findeth its cry;  
Gods of the way-out-yonder  
Answer me why!

ETHEL M. KELLEY.

# AT THE GRAY WOLF'S DEN

By B. M. Bower

LEN sat down upon the nearest flat rock and considered, the while little, thrill waves of pride chased through her nervous system.

She had stolen from the ranch, all alone, to find the den of the gray wolf which prowled persistently around Gunyon Coulee, dining fastidiously upon the choicest yearlings in the neighborhood.

And she had found it. More, the gray wolf knew that she had found it, and circled restlessly around the coulee's rim, keeping watch.

If only some one would come, or if only she dared leave the place! She was awaking to the fact that stealing out alone to find wolf dens carried with it certain disadvantages, inasmuch as, while she knew that mother wolves have a disagreeable habit of carrying off and hiding cunningly their young at the slightest alarm, she was ignorant of the simple stratagem of "flagging" a den with a bit of clothing, thus being able to leave the den with impunity for hours.

She had not studied the subject, and as the cowboys generally found other, and more interesting, things to talk about when in her presence, the surreptitious feastings of the gray wolf did not interest her—until Teddy became a victim.

Everyone who knew Len knew all about Teddy, and how Len had rescued him from an uncomfortable death in a water hole, dragged him home with Jerry, her horse, and fed him on red-pepper tea until he quit shaking; how he had rewarded her by butting her into a corner of the stall and spilling the last pint of tea all down her skirt;

how she had climbed into the manger and out through the window to escape the ingratitude of her patient; how she had named him Teddy for—I will omit Len's reason for naming him Teddy. At any rate, Len had coddled him all through the winter, keeping him in the hay corral, where he wasted enough good "blue-joint" to feed several calves more deserving than he, and shutting him by force in an empty chicken house whenever the weather looked threatening and the wind veered to the north.

And this morning Jim had found Teddy down in the lower field, dead and more unbeautiful than ever—and Teddy never had been handsome, whatever Len may have said. Of course it was the gray wolf that did it; everyone agreed as to that, and so the presence of the gray wolf had become a personal grievance to Len, and she had ridden sternly forth to mete out a just punishment.

Now that she had found the den she was at a loss what to do next. In her ignorance she saw nothing to do but wait for help until help came.

Yellow sunlight lay warm on hill and hollow, and little heat waves quivered lazily up from the moist, spring soil. Down in the bottom, where the trail picked its way gingerly among numerous deep washouts, prairie dogs stood impertinently upon their stubby tails and chip-chip-chipped garrulously to one another, quite content with the world, since the sun shone and the grass roots were sweet and juicy.

Of a sudden, those farther down the coulee raised shrill protest against an invader, and with a defiant flit of tail dove headlong into their burrows. The

wave of consternation spread up the trail until its shrill significance reached even Len's inattentive ears and thoughts, and she looked below. At the first glance she sprang up, and waved her battered felt hat—rather, Jim's battered felt hat—vigorously.

"Hi! Hello-o-o!"

A man looked up, stared a minute, and then stopped.

"Come quick! I've found a d-e-n-n!"

Len threw a prolonged emphasis upon the last word, so that it sounded very much, to the man, as though she cried out that something or some one was dead. He threw himself hastily from his horse and scrambled up the steep slope, his spurs striking sharply upon the rocks as he came.

It was not until he was within ten paces of her that Len remembered an extremely disagreeable fact. It was the fact that she had not spoken to Cal Emmett for a month, and Cal Emmett, likewise, had not spoken to her. And there was yet discernible upon the third finger of her left hand, a tiny streak of white in the surrounding tan—where a ring had been. Before she had decided how to meet this unforeseen emergency, he stood upon the level beside her—and he was much taller than usual, Len thought.

"What's dead?" he panted.

"Nothing's dead." Len was icily civil, seeing that she must speak. Not even Len had the heart to call a fellow up that killing slope to meet a stony silence. Beside, she was in desperate need of his help. "I found the gray wolf's den, is all. I can't leave, because she's hanging around close. I saw her. And I want some one—I want Jim—to dig it out for me."

"H-m. Yuh taking up wolfig as a trade?"

"If I was, I'd have a pick and shovel along." Len's eyes snapped, if her voice did not. "I wouldn't care two straws for the old den, but—she killed Teddy!"

"The dickens she did! I'll bet she found him pretty blamed hot."

This sounded very like Cal Emmett, who had teased Len unmercifully about

that red-pepper tea, but it did not sound sympathetic, in view of the recent tragedy. Len glared.

"Whereabouts is the den?"

"Right there, in the shade of that currant bush." Len waved a gloved hand perfunctorily. She was wishing that Cal Emmett was somewhere—she didn't care where—she did hate so to be looked at in that way.

"That don't look to me like a wolf den," said he, rising from a careful inspection and brushing the dirt from his knees.

"Well, it is. I saw a pup run in there."

"You're dead sure it wasn't a——"

"Don't I know a wolf from a jack rabbit?" Len wanted very much to stamp her foot, but refrained. She wouldn't give Cal Emmett the satisfaction of knowing that she was angry. She wanted to be calm and cold.

"Yeah—yuh *ought* to, for a fact."

"And why would the mother hang around the way she's doing, if this wasn't the place?"

"That's right," admitted Cal, making himself a cigarette.

"If you'd ride over to Beckman's, and get a—that is, I wish you'd go tell Jim to come, if you'd be so kind."

Cal's big, blue eyes gave her a stare like a meditative baby, the innocence of which bore false witness as to his mood.

"Where'll I be likely t' find Jim at?" he asked, politely.

Len drew her brows down sharply before she remembered and smoothed them.

"Jim's at home. I hate to bother you, Mr. Emmett——"

"I sure hate to be bothered, too, Miss Adams."

Len eyed him suspiciously. One could never be quite sure of Cal when he adopted that tone. Before she had decided upon her answer, he was hurrying down the bluff, slipping and sliding in the loose gravel and never once looking back until he reached his horse and swung into the saddle—and by that time Len's eyes had turned to the opposite hill, so that she did not see his lingering, upward glance.

"She makes a mighty pretty flag—but it's a wonder she missed learning how to flag a den. Her way suits me, all right, all right."

He grinned hopefully, and galloped off up the coulee, and Len watched him out of sight, and tried not to remember so many things.

The mother wolf paddled silently to the coulee's rim, and sniffed uneasily down at her, then stole away to squat safely beyond gunshot, and keep anxious vigil over her home.

Len hoped fervently that Cal would think to borrow a gun—that is, to tell Jim to bring a gun. She was not sure whether Cal would return, or if he would go for Jim. One could never predict, with any degree of certainty, what Cal would do, and under the present circumstances—Len contented herself by telling the prairie dogs she didn't care what he did.

For a time she amused herself by throwing pebbles down the bluff and watching them bound high in air when they struck a rock, or roll away into the dog town, where they were greeted with shrill scoldings from the inhabitants.

When the old wolf stole nearer, she shooed at her with her hat, and told her to "just wait, you horrid old thief." Thinking of Teddy, and the cute way he had of prying open the gate and walking straight to the kitchen door, where she fed him potato parings and frozen apples, she blinked and thought savagely of the pleasure it would give her to exterminate, with her own hands, every wolf in the country.

She speculated upon the probable number of pups hidden away in the dank earth under her feet somewhere, and smiled maliciously across at the gray beast squatting watchfully, its keen nose pointed toward her.

"You *would* kill my Teddy, would you?"

"She's sure wise to the best on the market, that old lady is."

Len sprang up and confronted Cal. On one shoulder he carried Beckman's rifle, on the other a pick and a spade.

"I cut across on top, coming back. It's nearer," he explained. "It's lucky

I did, too, or you'd been afoot. That Jerry horse of yours was just thinking about hitting the trail for the ranch. He just about sized it up that you'd clean forgot you owned him. He's anchored to a rock now. I guess he'll stay a while."

Thus swept into good-fellowship, Len abandoned her carefully fostered dignity and smiled a bit.

Cal removed coat and vest, laid them high and dry upon a great, flat boulder that thrust its nose out from the bluff near them, and went to work in a very business-like manner—which should have pleased Len mightily, but didn't.

She climbed upon the boulder, and sat down beside the familiar brown coat, and watched him toss the yellow dirt nonchalantly over his left shoulder, just as if it were the easiest thing in the world to do, and as if his sole duty in life lay in digging out wolf dens for pink-cheeked girls with brown hair that curled tantalizingly around the ears, and brown eyes that had a language all their own.

"Where were you going when I called you? Over to Beckman's?"

Len slid her gloved fingers caressingly along the collar of the brown coat and smiled tentatively at Cal.

"There's nothing over to Beckman's that interests me," retorted Cal, between spadefuls.

"Mame was home yesterday," observed Len, demurely.

"Yeah—she's home t'day, too."

"I wondered what kept you so long." Len patted the coat furtively.

Cal had *not* been long. His long-suffering horse was yet breathing heavily from his hard gallop across country. Cal gave an irritated laugh, and struck his spade savagely upon a rock.

"I ain't equipped for traveling by telegraph," he remarked. "I'm glad it seemed long to *yuh*. That's a good sign. It's about four miles there and back, and I was gone as much as fifteen or twenty minutes."

"I asked where you were going when I called you. I didn't know it was you till you got half up the hill."

"Aw, come off. Your eyes ain't fail-

ing yuh—they're just as shiny as they ever was."

The eyes smiled immediately, without waiting their owner's permission. When she felt them smile she turned them resolutely upon the prairie dogs, which were immune from such insidious dangers. But Cal had an instant's bliss, which was distinctly heartening.

"I was headed for the Clay Coulee field, after a few head of beef."

"Oh, and I'm keeping you!" This with exaggerated dismay.

Cal stopped and wiped big drops of perspiration from his forehead—for tossing spadefuls of wet earth over one's shoulder, on the south side of a barren bluff, with the sun shining squarely upon one's back, is warm work even though it is, in a sense, a labor of love performed in the service of a girl with brown eyes that can smile upon occasion. Furthermore, cow-punchers are not, as a rule, much accustomed to the use of pick and spade.

"Do you think they're in much farther?" asked Len, sympathetically. "You've dug in an awful ways. Aren't you tired?"

Cal was, but he had no notion of admitting such a humiliating fact. He knelt and thrust the pick handle back into the hole, and was rewarded by a muffled snarl from within.

"They're there, all right, the little dev-sinners. I'll have 'em out before you know it."

"O-h-h. Will they bite?" Len apprehensively drew up her feet and sat on them, and Cal suspended work to look at her.

"Yeah, they'll eat yuh up, I expect. Yuh look good enough to eat. I'll look out they don't get a chance, though."

"It seems a shame to kill them," she relented, meditatively. "They didn't kill Teddy."

"It's a case of the sins uh the f-a-ther—"

"Mother," corrected Len, grimly. "Jim saw her going across the 'dobe patch."

"Then the case don't fit worth a cent. The Bible sure says fathers. I guess it thinks women hadn't ought to be held

responsible for a lot they do. I'm with it there."

"You don't know anything about women—or the Bible, either. If you're too tired to finish, I'll dig a while."

For answer Len got another stare of baby innocence, and, knowing it of old, blushed. It wasn't safe to trifle with Cal at such times.

He dug silently for five minutes.

"What will you do with them, Cal?" Len ventured, timidly.

"Crack 'em on the head with the pick."

"Ugh! You cruel, mean wretch." Len tucked her riding skirt closely about her and shuddered.

"What are yuh having me dig 'em out for?" he demanded.

"I don't care, you needn't be so brutal. Just because they're little and helpless——"

"Oh, if yuh don't want 'em——" Cal leaned upon the spade, and drew a long sigh of relief. Digging in that clay was no fun.

"I never said I didn't want you to dig them out for me. I never saw a baby wolf. Do hurry, Cal! They must be awful cute."

He bent obediently to his work again, pondering upon the inconsistency of womankind—especially of that bit of it curled up on the rock, with her feet tucked under her in that adorable fashion, and her eyes big with shivery anticipation.

And the way his shoulders ached was enough to make a better man swear.

"Er r-r yap!"

"O-o-oh! Look out, Cal, he'll bite, and then you'll get hydro-o-oh, there he goes!" Len trampled the brown coat recklessly in her excitement, as the squirming, snarling bit of gray, suddenly released, darted away down the bluff like a dingy streak of lightning.

Cal walked slowly over to the rock, and Len sat down again.

"Aren't there any more? I didn't think they could run that way."

"No," said he, slowly, "there ain't any more—because that ain't a wolf pup. That there was a swift."

"Was it, Cal? Honest?" A swift!

That most timid, most harmless of animals!

"Yes, it was, all right. How the little devil got so far up the bluff—he must have been coming down from that dog town on top, and when he seen you he dodged into the first hole he come to."

If he had laughed then, if he had so much as smiled, Len would instantly have gone home, and she would have hated him forever more. As it was, she disposed her small person more comfortably upon the rock, quite as if she meant to stay a while, and let the corners of her mouth tip down instead of up, as they were wont to do. Cal was not sure but there were tears in her eyes.

"Of course, I suppose you'll go and tell everybody—" she began, in an aggrieved tone.

"Helen!"

Len's heart gave an uncomfortable flop at the sternness of it. It was the way he had spoken her name when she tossed her engagement ring over her shoulder at him, on an occasion well remembered by both.

"Well, I suppose of course everybody'll find it out, whether you tell 'em or not," she amended, hurriedly. "I never saw such a place for knowing everything that goes on. I just know everyone I see for a month'll ask me what's the bounty on swifts."

"Yeah? I wouldn't give it away, then, if I was you."

"I won't need to." Len spoke rather spitefully. "Mame Beckman'll do that, fast enough."

Cal eyed her furtively, and rubbed his aching biceps.

"I guess I'll make a smoke," he remarked. "Digging dens ain't like swinging in somebody's hammock—a red hammock, with green fringe on it—"

Len shifted uneasily. She knew the hammock he referred to.

"You don't mind tobacco smoke, do you?"

"You know I don't!" snapped Len. Time was when Cal, lounging in the red hammock with green fringe, had caught whiffs of paradise from lumpy, ill-

shaped cigarettes of Len's proud making. It wasn't nice of him to forget that.

Cal rolled a cigarette with painstaking exactitude, and smoked silently, leaning against the rock at Len's side.

Denied the advantage of facing an embarrassing situation from behind a veil of smoke, Len contented herself with scuffing the heel of one shoe against a jagged point of the rock, while she studied the opposite bluff.

"How's Mame going t' know about that swift? How'll she find it out?"

"Same as she found out—other things she wasn't supposed to know."

"But Bill Winters ain't onto this."

"Bill Winters!" Len curled her lips in a way that was unpleasant to see.

"Gee, there's a lot uh good digging gone t' waste," complained Cal, irrelevantly. "I wish I could move that excavation over t' the ranch—it'd make a dandy root cellar for the old man; he needs one bad. And nothing but one poor, lone, scared little swift!"

"Well, if you'd gone after Jim, like I wanted you to—"

"You didn't want me t' go after Jim." Cal smiled innocently at his boots.

"I did. I *told* you to send Jim." Len's eyes snapped annihilatingly at his handsome profile.

"Yeah, yuh *told* me"—Cal slowly exhaled a lungful of smoke—"but yuh meant—"

"I meant just what I said. I fully expected you to send him over, and go on about your work. I didn't want you to dig any dens for *me*. And if you tell Mame Beckman—"

"It's a cinch I'll burn the earth getting over there t' tell her," he interrupted, settling back against the rock.

"You told her about our—quarrel," cried Len, falling back upon her past grievance, as women have a way of doing when the present one becomes too intangible to hold with dignity.

"I did not." At that moment Cal's eyes did not look in the least babyish. "You must think I'm hard up for something t' tell."

"She said you told her."

"Well, that lets me out. It ain't good manners t' call a woman a liar."

"Still," persisted Len, though her eyes were more peaceful. "She found out somehow, and I never mentioned it to a living soul."

"It was Bill Winters told her. He got it from Steve, and Steve was in the next room and heard us. I thumped Bill good—I guess he never told Mame that—but Steve, he got the best of me. He's a hard man t' handle, Steve is," Cal grinned, naïvely.

Len swung her feet imperturbably, to the further damage of her shoes, while she digested this welcome bit of news. She remembered that one of Cal's eyes had been circled with blue, at the dance two weeks ago, and that no one had seemed to know what had caused the disfigurement—Mame least of all.

Cal turned impulsively and leaned both elbows upon the rock; his eyes, wherein love shone, on a level with hers.

"Len, what's the use uh making a bluff at being mad at each other? It ain't pleasant, nor healthy. It spoils a man's appetite, and plays the dickens with his sleep, t' say nothing of his feelings otherways. I'll bet you don't give a damn whether my grandmother was a Swede or a Flathead Indian—now, do yuh!"

Len drew her skirt petulantly away from his elbow.

"I never did care anything about your grandmother," she said, coldly.

Cal stared.

"But that's what the scrap was about!" he exclaimed. "You was cranky t' begin with, when I first rode up t' the house. I noticed it. And when you said you hated the sight of a Swede, I said my grandmother was one, and you said——"

"I didn't!" flashed Len. "You——"

"Oh, I ain't going t' fight it all over again." Cal laughed grimly. "You wound up by throwin' my ring at my head—and I ain't the kind that don't know when he's licked. What I started out t' say was this: What are you goin' t' give me for digging out that swift?"

"I'll give you the bounty—seeing there isn't any—if you can catch him." Len loosened a flake of rock and tossed it absently down the hill.

"That's what I call gratitude," said he, with fine sarcasm. "I took your word for it and dug, when I knew——"

"Oh, 'the woman, she tempted me,'" scoffed Len.

"Yeah—that's right. She sure did, and does. And that ain't all; she always will, so long as she looks——"

"I didn't mean that way," Len broke in, hurriedly. "I meant Adam."

"Adam who?" Cal's eyes narrowed.

Len smiled, in spite of herself, for just the tiniest fraction of a second. She recovered her gravity instantly.

"I think," she said, with much dignity, "we might find that den, if we hunted a little. But of course you'd go and kill them——"

"And they didn't eat Teddy—poor little darlings," mimicked Cal, tormentingly. He wanted to goad Len to boxing his ears—when, he felt sure, he could master the situation, and get rid of the ring in his pocket.

But Len was coldly passive.

"He was hot stuff, Teddy was," continued Cal, watching her face.

Len gloomily eyed the horizon.

"I'll bet that old wolf had cramps all the way home."

Len gave a sigh of patient martyrdom.

"When's the funeral?"

The pink of Len's cheeks deepened to red. What if Cal knew she had insisted on Teddy's being buried? She rolled her gloves into a tight little ball. Cal fancied he saw a quiver of lip, and abandoned his teasing.

"Lemme see your finger a minute."

Len blushed, and covered her left hand quickly with the other.

"There's a streak on it that ought t' be covered up. It looks bad," persisted Cal, catching both hands in his.

Len snatched them away. There was no red in her cheeks now. Indeed, there was no pink, either.

"Stop! I'm going to tell you the real reason I——"

"It's time, I think," said Cal, quietly,

stepping back. "I never did believe it was because my grandmother——"

"Oh, be still about your grandmother! Cal, did you give Mame that cowboy picture of you? She showed it to me, and you told me you didn't have any when I asked you for one."

"Mame swiped that picture from Slim, last Thanksgiving."

Len gasped.

"Why, the idea. She said you gave it to her for Christmas, and it was just before that I asked——"

"As I said before," said Cal, bitterly, "it ain't nice t' call a woman a liar. All the same, Mame Beckman needs t' be introduced t' the truth; she ain't never had a speakin' acquaintance with it since I knew her."

"She's a Swede," explained Len, softly. "And when I said I hated Swedes, you said you was stuck on them. And so—and the very next day she came over and started joshing me about your grandmother. Anyone would have thought you must have told her—especially when she said you did."

"And you called it off without giving a fellow a chance t' square himself!" retorted Cal, bitterly. "All I got t' say is, unless the fellow thinks a heap of the girl that throws him down like that, he won't throw no more loops at her."

Len certainly was bent on ruining her shoes, the way she grated the leather off on that jagged place in the rock.

"But—if the fellow—*does* care a heap——" Len stopped there, her cheeks very pink.

No one, looking over the edge of the bluff just then, could have accused Cal of not being the master of the situation.

When darkness blurred the hillsides, and only the stars were standing guard, a lank, gray shadow slid warily down the coulee's rim, where wandering cattle had beaten a faint trail in the yellow clay. Sharp-pointed, sentient ears listened long in the silence; nervous, quivering nostrils sniffed the still air suspiciously.

Close beside the big rock the shadow stopped, examined critically the bold imprint of high-heeled boots, and of others that were but half the size; circled cautiously once around the boulder and disappeared beneath, where hungry, insistent whinings hushed to murmurous suckling.

Long before day the den of the gray wolf was empty, and seven gray bits of inquisitiveness were nosing perplexedly the dank walls of a strange, new home.



## OUTCASTS

**H**OW many roses, yet unblown,  
The summer leaves behind  
To wither, ere their bloom has known  
The kiss of sun and wind.

How many unwaking hearts  
In Death's dim garden lie,  
Silenced, before they learned Love's arts,  
Or knew his smile or sigh!

CHARLOTTE BECKER.

## CUPID AT HENLEY

By Cosmo Hamilton

**T**RING followed Sturry into the canoe quietly, and pushed off from the Isthmian lawn in solemn silence.

He was almost ridiculously happy. At tea, on the afternoon of that very day, his hand, with a vagueness which is peculiar to all adventurous men, wandered into Effie Leybourne's—who left it there for several minutes.

With the readiness, the brilliancy, and the dash which belongs exclusively to university men, he had made up his mind, as he ran a more than usually elusive piece of jelly to earth, to propose that evening, and get it over. It is not the very least use dragging in, at this point, a conversation he had had with Sturry, in which he announced grimly, and with a touch of mystery, that he had resolved never to marry. The conversation took place before Eights' week and Commem. Eights' week and Commem are very bad for resolutions never to marry. Then, too, it is old-fashioned to argue that an engagement need necessarily interfere with a resolution never to marry. As most people know, the more often one is engaged the less frequently one is married. All of which had occurred to Tring, who, having arrived at the hoary age of twenty-two, was a philosopher, naturally.

"Whither away?" asked Sturry.

"To the *Dainty Microbe*," replied Tring, indifferently.

"What, again to-day? . . . I beg your pardon. I mean, of course, why not?"

Sturry's suppressed guffaw caused a slight vibration in the canoe.

"Why not?" echoed Tring. "May as well paddle there as anywhere else."

"And then," said Sturry, "you may as well take Leybourne's sister for a little paddle."

Tring understood the vibration, but retained the indifference.

"Very well," he said, obligingly. "Perhaps it would be kind."

The canoe rocked.

"And then," continued Sturry, who was a man of some character, "I may as well paddle back to the Isthmian."

"Very well," said Tring. "Perhaps it would be useful. I only hope to goodness we shall be able to dodge the inevitable Miss Worle."

"Is that the chaperon? The lady with the tin-kettle voice, the constant giggle, the falling hairpins, and the Roman nose?"

Tring's paddle became almost savage.

"Yes," he said, regardless of grammar, "that's her. So far, I haven't managed to be alone with Leybourne's sister for five consecutive minutes—not, of course, that I particularly want to be alone with her. Rather a bore, really. But, as a chaperon, Miss Worle would take a lot of beating. She even managed to find us when we were utilizing the gardener's rubbish heap between a dance at Magdalen ball. Her giggle makes my blood poor."

The way on the canoe was extremely rapid. It took all Sturry's presence of mind to prevent bumping with the small craft plying from one houseboat to another.

The houseboats gleamed with lights. A faint breeze swung the Chinese lanterns, and made their reflections dance erratically upon the water. The jangle of pianos mingled with the tum-tum of banjos. Sopranos arose high above altos. The wagging of tongues merged

into merry laughter. The noise of the water lapping against the moving punts formed an accompaniment which was very pleasing.

Miss Leybourne was standing on the *Dainty Microbe* as they drew alongside. Miss Worle, in a monstrous hat—a kind of winter garden full of everlasting flowers and grasses—was busily arranging cushions in the punt.

"My profound heart," whispered Tring, "Miss Worle!"

Miss Worle looked up. All the peculiarities on her hat nodded roguishly.

"Is that you, Mr. Tring?" she cried. "Are you sure?"

"The gods of your fathers have pity on you," whispered Sturry.

Tring boarded the punt jauntily.

"I am under the impression that it is," he replied. "Are you going out in this punt?"

Miss Worle giggled horribly.

"Just hark at him, darling. *Am I* going out in the punt? *I love Oxford men!*"

Effie Leybourne met Tring's agonized look of appeal with one of utter unconsciousness.

"It is a beautiful night for the river," she said. "Shall we start at once, Mr. Tring?"

"Honored," said Tring, giving her a hand.

"You sit here, darling, and I'll sit next to you. Then we can look back, and see that Mr. Tring doesn't splash us with the paddle."

A strange, strangled noise came from Sturry's canoe, which had turned its nose back to the Isthmian. With a vicious shove, Tring pushed off, and paddled into midstream. The moonlight fell upon his face. There was a peculiar glint in his eye.

Slowly, to the constantly underlined babble of the inevitable Miss Worle, they made their way upstream. Effie, with one pretty hand playing with the water, watched the silent Tring with a smile of infinite amusement, and some compassion; and Tring, who could not see her face, set the music of the moving water to words which no rhyming dictionary, nor the heavily humorous work

of the doctor, contained. And yet the words were Saxon.

"Oh, oh," cried Miss Worle, with exaggerated ecstasy, "mysterious minstrels, as I'm a Dutchman! I *adore* mysteries, and I dote on minstrels. Mr. Tring, if you don't stop, and let me listen, I shall scream."

Tring chose the lesser of the two evils. The punt in which the minstrels were grouped was broad in the beam, and well lit by lanterns. A small, neat man was playing a yacht piano delightfully, and a tall, thin one was standing by his side singing. Two others were lolling on cushions, playing castanets with an ashamed air. Each of them was dressed in white flannels edged with broad bands of ribbon, and they wore the usual mask. Whether they were masked because their features were too unknown or too well known to show, whether they were poor peers who were not proud, or proud actors who were very poor, it would be difficult to say. Very likely they were undergraduates from the Isis or the Cam doing it for the joke of the thing, and expecting to pay for their joke.

The tall one was singing, with an air of almost unwilling admiration and amazement, a little ballad of perhaps a slightly personal character. The words of the chorus, which he spoke, were heard distinctly by the ladies in Tring's punt:

"She was fat—  
Extremely fat!"

She weighed twenty stone in nothing but her hat!

She was *fat*;  
Think of that  
Well, in fact,  
In her hat,  
I have never seen a fat thing—*half* so fat!"

"In her what?" asked Miss Worle, anxiously.

Effie, about whose unwilling smile there was a tinge of apprehension—she knew how difficult minstrels find it to draw a line on a river—coughed a little, and slightly straightened her back.

"Is that only the first verse, Mr. Tring, do you know?" she said.

Now Tring, who looked upon the

song as the ornament of his own repertoire, understood the cough and the straightened back.

"Er—I—is it? I don't know the thing. I should think perhaps it might be."

"Don't you think we had better move on? I am afraid we may be run into."

Tring dipped his paddle deep.

"Oh, why?" cried Miss Worle, clasping her hands. "Oh, don't go. I adore the kind of songs which get riper as they grow. Is that the kind of song which gets riper as it grows, Mr. Tring? I hoped it was. What did he say? In her what?"

Tring paddled for all he was worth.

"If there is anything I *do* hate it is not hearing the last word of a thing! That's why, you know, Mr. Tring, I so much prefer French actors to English ones. English ones, especially when they are foolish enough to attempt Shakespeare, only give one the first three words of every line; while one can hear a French one to the bitter end. Of course, it's better that one shouldn't hear the bitter end sometimes, isn't it, Mr. Tring?" She giggled again.

Hearing nothing that she said, Tring flung in a "Yes" or a "No," and gave an occasional laugh where it seemed necessary, and went on thinking. They were not unexciting thoughts apparently, for every now and then his mouth twitched and a gleam came into his eye.

He looked back over his shoulder, and saw that he had put a good deal of water between the punt and the house-boats.

"Are you fond of wild flowers?" he asked Miss Worle, abruptly, with a melted-butter smile.

"I am afraid I am," she replied, coyly. "Do you know, I'm afraid I'm one of those girls who like everything wild! It's very naughty of me, I know, but—there it is. I perfectly adore to meet any one who has made a collection of wild oats. Do you collect wild oats, Mr. Tring?"

Tring was quietly making for the bank. The gleam was still in his eye.

"No," he replied, affably. "I have never gone in for collecting things, especially wild oats. It's rather an expensive hobby."

Miss Worle laughed wildly.

"Isn't he clever, darling?" she cried, at the top of her voice. "But, then, all Oxford men are clever. Oh, and *do* tell me, Mr. Tring. Are you by any chance a blood? And, if so, why? I should so like to know what is a blood!"

Tring was peering through the darkness to find a slippery part of the bank.

"A blood?" he said. "A blood is a man who wears riding kit, and never rides; who drinks more than he can carry, and makes noises in the theatre; who wears horseshoe pins, and stares knowingly at the racing tapes. He always goes in for a velvet collar on his dress coat, eventually gets sent down for throwing soda siphons at policemen, and blossoms into a portly stock-jobber, who cultivates pansies in a small suburban garden. . . . Hello, here's the bank!"

Effie watched Tring curiously. She knew, with that uncomfortable instinct which the majority of women possess, that his one idea since they had met had been to lose Miss Worle. She herself would many times have been rather glad if a mild headache had kept Miss Worle in bed. Of course, it would have been perfectly easy for her to have arranged for some one to take Miss Worle off her hands, but she was one of those girls who like to see men do their own work. The fact, curiously enough, that Miss Worle had always managed to find them caused her infinite amusement, because she was, perhaps, one of the few girls in the world with a really keen sense of humor. As she sat in the punt and thought the situation out, she couldn't make up her mind whom to admire the more—Tring and his quietly frantic efforts, or Miss Worle and her elephantine persistence. The gleam in Tring's eye, and his intense affability to the girl he so obviously wished at Hanover, told her quite plainly that he was making a supreme effort to shake her off. She was quite sure, too, from his studied surprise at finding the punt so near the

bank, that the bank was to be the *mise en scène* of his dislodging operation.

"Hello," repeated Tring, with more surprise than before, "here's the bank."

"How jolly!" cried Miss Worle; "let's land."

Now Tring's one idea was to get Miss Worle to land, and to land on a slippery part of the bank, so that she would be bound, after a hopeless scramble, to slide back into the water and get her feet wet, in order that he might then, with much solicitude and thoughtfulness, walk her back to the houseboat, leave her there, and return, hand over hand, to Effie. It was, it need hardly be said, a very objectionable maneuver. But then, a chaperon is a very objectionable institution. That was Tring's excuse.

Most men would have encouraged the notion of landing eagerly. Not so Tring, who was a diplomat.

"I don't think I would, if I were you," he said.

"But why not?" said Miss Worle. "What's the good of a bank if you don't land on it?"

"There's something in that," said Tring. "But you see it is very dark and very slippery, and you would be pretty certain to slip and get wet."

"No, please don't," said Effie, who clearly saw Tring's plan.

"I—slip, and get wet!" Miss Worle got up. "I like that."

"It's very risky to get one's feet wet," said Tring, suppressing a rising excitement. "Even I couldn't land here safely."

Miss Worle giggled roguishly.

"Do you dare me?" she cried.

"Yes," said Tring, now quite certain that the day was his.

With a little playful yell, Miss Worle jumped, pushing the punt out as she did. Of course, the inevitable took place. There being no branch to clutch at, back she slipped into the water, which rose up to her knees.

Tring was horribly upset. Quivering with triumph, he uttered long, choice sentences of deep solicitude and mild reproof, steered the punt to an easy landing, tied its nose to a young willow,

and rushed to the uncomfortable lady's assistance.

"You shouldn't have dared me," she said, hysterically, as Tring dragged her to the top of the bank. "You evidently haven't met a soldier's daughter before. When I was quite a little thing my Cousin Tom dared me to eat a cake of soap. I hated soap, but I had to, and I did. Don't ask me what the consequences were. . . . Look at me—only look at me! This darling frock ruined—completely ruined. I suppose you had better paddle me home."

Effie glanced at Tring's face with a look of keen enjoyment.

"Oh," said Tring, eagerly, "don't go back yet. I dare say it'll dry all right. It's a very warm night."

"But, my dear Mr. Tring, you don't suppose I am going to be so idiotic as to step into an attack of rheumatic fever? I'm very sorry, I'm sure, to spoil things, but I really must ask you to take me back. No, I don't think I had better go in the punt. I think I'd better sprint back along the bank. It's quicker that way, and I shan't get chilled."

"Let me go with you," said Tring, who could barely control his delight. "It's only a few hundred yards from here across the field. Let's go at once. I should regret it all my life if you were to get a chill."

Miss Worle giggled.

"But what about Effie?" she asked.

"Oh, I have tied the punt up, and I'm sure Miss Leybourne won't mind being left for a minute or two."

Without waiting for Effie's answer, Tring clutched at Miss Worle's hand with the masterfulness which is so appreciated by women, and ran her off.

As they disappeared into the shadows, Effie threw back her pretty little head, and laughed uncontrollably.

Now Effie had liked Tring very much from the moment she met him, not because he was a good-looking, well-set-up person, although that may have had something to do with it, but principally because he was a "blue," because he sang love songs with immense expression, because he waltzed like an automaton, and because he had a way—it

is quite easy—of looking at her as though she were the only woman in the world. All these qualifications, however, were completely outweighed by the success of his quiet plan for getting rid of Miss Worle. For Effie was a thoroughgoing woman, and considered diplomacy the greatest virtue in the calendar.

Wearing a smile of infinite content and very pleasant anticipation, Effie annexed Miss Worle's lonely cushions, added them to her own collection, made herself completely comfortable, and looked about her with the eye of an artist.

The moon had risen, and had flung a long, broad band of silver down the middle of the stream. The outline of the still willows and poplars, which before had merged smudgily into the sky, now stood out clear-cut, edged with silver. The thousand lights of the houseboats, club tents and gardens twinkled ahead of her, and the hum of distant voices and the faint sounds of music filtered through the air. An occasional punt lapped its slow way past; every now and then energetic oars plashed along, and an electric launch with two staring eyes moved stealthily through the water. On her left, sleek rats ran from place to place where lunch and tea parties had been, and sometimes the piercing voices of the Hambledon peahens arose peevishly.

The quick pud-pud of rubber-soled shoes came nearer, and stopped.

"It's—it's rather ripping now," said Tring, "isn't it?" He got into the punt, and stood in the middle of it, irresolutely.

Effie looked up at him, and gave a little bubbling laugh.

Tring felt slightly uncomfortable. He looked with some anxiety at the space by her side, and remained standing.

"I saw Miss Worle back," he said. "She—I—it was rather an unlucky end of her evening."

Effie was still looking at him, and still laughing quietly.

"I do hope she will be none the worse for it. She seemed very cheerful when

I left her. She giggled—I mean, smiled—quite in her usual—er—ordinary way, when I said good-night. She—she asked me to paddle you back at once. But do you think that's absolutely necessary?"

Effie's laugh became almost hysterical.

Tring felt his ears get hot and his hands cold. With a kind of gasp he sat down by her side.

"I believe," he said, "you know something."

Effie wiped her eyes weakly.

"I have rarely seen anything quite so—so flagrant in my life," she said.

Humiliation and amusement struggled with each other at the corners of Tring's mouth. Amusement won.

"Oh, well," he said, "you'd have done the same if you'd been me."

"Why?"

"Oh, well," said Tring, coming to the conclusion that a dean's breakfast was infinitely to be preferred to proposing; "if you'd been me, and I'd been you, and Miss Worle had still been Miss Worle, and you were spoiling to say something to me as much as I have been spoiling to say it to you, and Miss Worle had still been Miss Worle——" He stopped, and gave a hideous, mirthless laugh. "Well, it's a hundred to one her feet would have been wet."

"But it's a hundred to one that I shouldn't have been spoiling at all," said Effie.

Tring took his courage into both his hands, and bent slightly toward her.

"Will it bore you if I become—auto-biographical?" he asked. "What I want to say isn't as long as the word. It's just this. Some months ago—I suppose all men have their idiotic moments—I made a vow never to marry."

"Really!" said Effie, with that touch of polite kindness one puts into one's voice when somebody tells one he is devoted to cheese.

Tring squirmed, but persisted.

"I said it was idiotic, but I was young then. Now, of course, it's different. Eight's week came along, you know, and that settled it."

"Settled what?"

"The whole show, you know—the vow never to marry."

"But why? What has 'Eights' week got to do with marriage?"

"A good deal more than people think," said Tring, "especially if the evenings are fine. At any rate, it has done for me. I knew it directly your brother introduced me to you. Miss Leybourne, will it bore you very much if I tell you I love you?"

"Shall I jump on board, or will you come and fetch me?" said Miss Worle.

It would be difficult to say whether Effie or Tring was the more intensely disgusted. Tring got up slowly, and gave Miss Worle a hand in.

"Some cushions, please, darling," she said. "Never say die, eh, Mr. Tring? I was so wet, you can't think. But I changed quickly, and ran all the way back. I thought you'd think it so unkind of me to leave you alone."

Neither answered her. The while she babbled on Tring silently untied the punt, and, with his lips tight together, paddled quickly back to the houseboat.

Even after he had handed his cargo aboard, Miss Worle stood by, utterly unconscious.

Whereupon, with a stroke of genius worthy of a better cause, Tring took a tailor's bill out of his pocket, wrote upon it: "Is it yes or no, *please?*" and handed it to Effie with his pencil.

She read it gravely, and turned her back upon him. Then she scrunched the paper up, pocketed the pencil, flung the paper into the punt, called out a cheery "Good-night," and, taking the still talking Miss Worle's arm, disappeared.

Depressed and unhappy, Tring punted into the stream, struck a match with shaking fingers, and held it inside his panama.

With the light it gave he saw that Effie had scratched out "Is it" and "or no."

"You may as well order a decent frock coat and topper, old man," he said to Sturry over a last pipe, "to be ready somewhere about 1906."

"Right," said Sturry.



## TO MADAME LA MARQUISE AFTER CATULLE MENDEZ

MARQUISE: I pray you—this gavotte  
To Lulli's notes from long ago:  
Let pensive grace its glamour throw  
O'er days that were and now are not.

And let who will eke out their lot  
Repining for their ancient show;  
Marquise—I pray you—this gavotte  
To Lulli's notes from long ago.

What though, without patchouli, lo,  
The market wench that was Javotte  
Lays down her laws of what is what,  
Till love itself we must not know—  
Marquise—I pray you—this gavotte.

THOMAS WALSH

# STORIES OF THE STREET

IV.—“AT PAR”

By L. J. Van Ness

THE quiet of the breakfast room was disturbed only by the subdued rustle of the paper in West's hands and the purring of the coffee machine by his wife's elbow.

Frowning slightly in her preoccupation, the woman remarked the silence, and passed it over; it was a part of her daily life—had been a part of it ever since, ten years before, the curtain had fallen upon their honeymoon.

She was accustomed to say that for ten hours of the day, from eight in the morning to six in the evening, Tom West was a mere money-making machine, with no end in life save the manipulation of the market, no conception of anything in the world save bank and railway statements, dividends, tickers and the ebb and flow of prices. Afterwards, from 6 P. M. to 8 A. M., he was a normal human being with almost human interests, including a wife.

Therein she did West justice, and some injustice. In point of fact, the man adored his wife after business hours. But it was most true that he forgot her completely throughout the Wall Street working day. And to that, perhaps, may be attributed his remarkable success—to the absolute concentration of all his faculties upon the matter in hand; which generally consisted in the “bearing” of some security which other men admired, but which West looked upon with the jaundiced eye of the skeptic confirmed in his pessimism so far as stock values were concerned.

As for his wife, for the time being her thoughts as well as her slim white fingers were busied about the tall copper pot in which the coffee brewed. Now, with a little nod of satisfaction, she

placed the extinguisher over the flame of the alcohol lamp, and glanced tentatively toward her husband, as though fearful of disturbing him.

Of West, only his fingers were visible; rough-hewn, blunt, heavy fingers that conveyed a distinct impression of the man's character, as the world saw it. They gripped almost fiercely the edges of the morning paper, which he held outspread so as thoroughly to curtain himself from his wife's gaze. Behind it he maintained an unbroken silence; his big, broad brow thrust forward aggressively, his lips set and tense, his gray eyes fairly dancing up and down the serried columns of figures, as he—to use his own phrase—tore the heart out of the market report.

The woman gazed upon the fingers with a tenderness glowing deep in her eyes; somehow they suggested to her very clearly the man she knew so well—that man whom the Street reckoned ruthless, but whom she loved with all her being, and who loved her in return with a devotion almost womanish—after business hours again.

But the paper—that she eyed with undisguised hostility; ten years had it opposed her across the breakfast table, and so long had she hated it with the hate of jealousy. She would never grow indifferent to it; it was as though he daily erected him a wall—of flimsy paper, but no less a wall—putting her apart from the thoughts of his heart, from the joys and cares of his daily life. She cradled her chin upon the backs of her laced fingers, and sighed aloud, smiling petulantly.

West responded by not so much as a stir of the sheet; the problem of the

moment held him absorbed, dead to all other interests. She reflected that even that was one of his traits that bound her to him the more nearly; the directness of his passions that brooked no conflicting considerations. So she waited, passably content, until his attention should become relaxed.

In this she may possibly be represented as one of the wisest of wives; that she was satisfied to fill a secondary place in her husband's thoughts for the portion of his day when they were demanded elsewhere. She made it a point never to obtrude herself when he weighed affairs, for she knew what few women seem capable of comprehending; that "*les affaires sont les affaires*"; that while business holds the center of man's stage, love must bide its cue in the wings. And she found love all the sweeter, when it came, for the waiting.

Nor did she undervalue herself in this rare docility. Though she did not demand his constant regard, it was not that she held herself undeserving. She was the most beautiful woman in the world—Tom West said so—and of all women the last to be careless of her appearance. A cardinal article of her faith was that more homes are disrupted by feminine dowdiness than by mere masculine perverseness. At that moment she was comfortably assured that her *negligée* was altogether dainty, that her hair was becomingly arranged, that she should seem at her best.

And, withal, she waited patiently!

In time West lowered the paper until its upper edge was level with the bridge of his nose. He stared at her absent-mindedly; the creature man was asserting its desire for refreshment, though the business man was lost in a pondering of men and measures. "Coffee ready?" he demanded, and promptly returned his gaze to the list of the previous day's transactions.

"Ready," she replied, quickly and clearly, "and waiting, Tom." She dropped the indispensable two lumps of sugar into West's cup, added the cream, then brimmed it with the steaming black liquor.

As she had anticipated—for she

studied the man closely—the sound of her voice and the stir of the tableware distracted the current of his thoughts. Reluctantly he folded the news sheet, and laid it at the side of his plate, accepted the cup, and began to stir the coffee with his spoon, monotonously, as though he feared it might lose virtue through inaction, meanwhile glaring at his plate.

She forebore to question him; she knew that before long he would begin to talk. Always, ever since she could remember, he had interlarded his breakfast with a one-sided discussion, a running comment on the ways of the Street, and on the part he happened to be playing therein at the particular time.

And so, inevitably, it came to pass. Presently he dropped the spoon and began to use his fork; and, "Funny thing about Belden," he observed, talking more at, than to, her.

"Yes?"—with the rising inflection.

"Yes. Funny thing about Belden and myself. We've been fighting tooth and nail for the last five years or so, and now it just happens that we're both hard up at the same time. Coincidence."

"How do you know he is hard up?"

"Don't know it." He was looking at her now, and interestedly, but she saw that he had forgotten her. The enthusiasm of logical deduction possessed him thoroughly; his imagination was wrapped with the joy of penetrating a rival operator's secret. He was happily formulating into phrases the tale that yesterday's ticker tape and to-day's market report had told to him. "Don't know it from Belden's own lips, that is. But he's rigging the market—ballooning Net Common—"

"Net Common?" she inquired, puzzled.

"New England Transit, common," he translated, impatiently; "his pet stock. He wants to boost it by wash sales as high as the market will stand, and then he's going to unload at a big profit. He plans to add the Bennington extension to the New England Transit system, and he needs money to buy in the bond issue. Bennington extension," he con-

tued, as though trying to make it perfectly clear to himself, beyond possibility of error, "is a big independent trolley line running north out of Hartford. It's practically bankrupt, and will default on the interest, due on the first, for its first mortgage four-per-cent bonds. Belden wants to buy them in, so that he can foreclose on the minute, and make Bennington extension a part of New England Transit. Slick, isn't he?"

But West was not asking a question to be answered, for he continued, almost without a break: "Belden found out that he wouldn't get 'em for a song yesterday," he said, chuckling. "Bennington Fours are selling at fifty-nine, and a drug on the market at that. But I'm holding a block on behalf of a Western syndicate, and Belden has agreed to pay me eighty for 'em. I gave him to understand that they'd never be a cent cheaper, so he had to knuckle under, and pass me his word to the deal."

"Yes," she breathed, vaguely, not greatly interested.

West paused to swallow his coffee, then sat back and watched the curtains bellying in the warm June breeze that had access through the open window.

"Tell you what," he broke out, seriously, "it was a great relief to me when I closed the transaction. I stand to get three or four hundred thousands out of it, and I need ready money the worst way, myself. That last rise in Ontario pinched me badly, and the banks are beginning to fight shy of my paper." He frowned, teetering abstractedly on two legs of his chair; then suddenly pulled out his watch. "Hello!" he announced. "I'll have to hustle. By, Bess."

West arose, came around to her chair, and bent over to kiss his wife. It was something that had taken place every business morning for ten years, and still there was nothing perfunctory about that kiss. There were streaks of gray in the hair above the man's temples, and a maze of fine wrinkles around the corners of his eyes; both had come in the duration of their married days, but West's heart was unaged, his ardor

unabated. The woman dreaded to think that the day was ever to dawn when he would know that caress for a habit, a formality; to her it meant such a very great deal.

She lifted her lips to his, and they were barely parted; her eyelids drooped heavily, and she sighed faintly. For the instant ten years dropped from their lives; West's gaze glorified the firm curve of her cheek, the full sweep of her bare throat; and he caught at his breath sharply.

Also he noticed a little anxious pucker between her brows, for which he laid the blame at the door of the oppressive weather, nor understood in the least what fear for him chilled her heart.

"Look here, m'dear," he suggested, in a severely practical tone, as he straightened up. "Don't you think you'd better run up to Newport?"

"And leave you here, alone, to stand the heat? No," she decided, firmly. "When Tom West takes a vacation, his wife will. Meanwhile, nothing worries me so much as the knowledge that you are working too hard—slaving your life out, dear. Be careful to-day, won't you—for my sake?"

"For no one else's, Bess," he laughed, lightly.

A minute later she was standing in the window's embrasure, screening herself in the folds of its light drapery, watching her husband as he ran down the steps and strode off toward the elevated station. And there she lingered long, thinking, anxious for him. He was strong, she would concede; but he had much to endure—weighty mental burdens, wearing bodily fatigue. And the day grew very hot indeed. From the street the dusty, baked smell of the asphalt came up to her in great, sultry puffs, and deep, sinuous parallels were being marked in the softened paving by the wheels of a passing huckster's wagon; a huckster who swaggered bare-headed in the sun glare, yawping infernally.

In the early afternoon a thunder-storm came growling out of Jersey, and sluiced the sweltering streets with tepid water. But the relief it brought in its

wake was but temporary. Later, the heat again became well-nigh unbearable. It was as though the city lay submerged in a torrid sea, whose invisible, glowing waves swept through the streets. So that the least movement became exertion; and exertion was own brother to exhaustion.

To dress for the evening was an ordeal, but one to be faced with a smile. For Tom liked to find her just so; it was good to him, when he had sloughed the cares of the day, to see her fresh, unwilted.

Later, she recalled that it was while she struggled to attire herself with the grudging assistance of a cross maid, that she was suddenly convinced by a subtly psychic, womanly intuition that something was amiss, either with Tom or with Tom's affairs.

But forebodings such as that are sternly to be relegated to the limbo of superstitions until the event proves their excuse. She fought off the groundless apprehension, and yet it was with a sort of terror that she awaited his homecoming; and West was later than was his wont. Long purple shadows were stealing down the quiet street, the sky was darkening, a breeze—a cool reprieve—had sprung up, when she recognized his footsteps. Their sound was as familiar to her as the beating of her own heart, but to-night she detected in their timbre something strange—perhaps an unsteadiness.

She was at the head of the stairs when the door opened and West slumped forward into the butler's arms; crumpled, enervated, crushed by the withering heat. In another instant she was by his side, abruptly composed, mistress of herself and of her fears; for this was what she had been awaiting, this that contingency the fear of which had held her by her boy's side when she might have been materially comfortable at the seashore.

His forehead was like a hot tile to her palm; dry, hard, slightly glazed. His face was a pallid mask, his lips feverish, and dry, and cracked, like a stale crust. Instinctively she knew what was first to be done.

"Ice water!" she demanded, of the servants, as she ripped West's collar from his shirt. "And cracked ice—quick! Telephone for Dr. Dexter; tell him to come at once. It's—it's life or death—"

At midnight she was sitting by his bedside, gazing hungrily into his set features, waiting for the arrival of the nurse whom Dexter was to send. The physician had been an hour gone, leaving her in a state more tranquil, reassured. West was by no means out of danger, but the chances were in his favor.

He lay like a log, swathed in blankets, without motion save for the slow, almost imperceptible heave of his stertorous respiration. The woman sat as quietly, tensely strung, elbow on knee, lips pressed tight against her knuckles. She could do naught but watch, wait and take West's temperature every quarter-hour. "If it goes above one hundred and four," Dexter had told her, "put him in the ice bath again—and send for me."

The man was in a drugged stupor, strychnine spurring his laggard heart action, morphine soothing him. Presently the woman bent forward, very cautiously, and slipped the clinical thermometer between his parted lips. West stirred uneasily, and his teeth clicked against the glass tube. Then again he lapsed into coma. She withdrew the thermometer, saw that it recorded an even one hundred, and was glad.

A second later, entirely without warning, West had cast the blankets aside, and was sitting bolt upright, jabbering in a frenzy of delirium. The woman gave a hurried order to the waiting servant to telephone Dexter, and returned to her husband's side.

"Belden—" he was iterating with savage emphasis; "Belden—Belden—"

"Hush, dear." Gently she forced him back, until his head rested upon the pillow, and as gently sponged his moist brow with ice water. He proved tractable enough, and seemed grateful for the cold applications; but the morphine was

stimulating his unhelmed imagination with a wavelike action; and he would talk, and did, by fits and starts.

By degrees, listening intently, she began to piece together a comprehensive statement of what lay upon his mind, that had sapped his strength until the sun had found him an easy victim. One phrase—"Belden broke faith"—served as a starting point; with it as a guide she was able to select fragments from West's incoherent ramblings, and to join them together, mosaic-like, until she understood it all.

"Belden broke faith—promised to buy at eighty—broke his contract—said he'd examined roadbed and rolling stock—come to conclusion that bonds were not worth the market—would pay sixty—damned scoundrel—need cash for Ontario deal—square with him—desperate fix—million put me on my feet, easy—make him pay par—"

Under the treatment of the physician and the nurse West subsided into silence. But the woman had heard enough to enable her to grasp the situation very completely.

West needed ready money for his various enterprises. If he did not get it, his failure was inevitable—from what he hinted. Although there would remain her private fortune, comparative poverty confronted the woman, though that was as nothing by the side of the resultant loss of her husband's prestige among his associates in "the Street." If Belden should triumph, if he should succeed in obtaining the Bennington Extension Fours at his own price, West's portion would be ruin.

She debated the matter throughout the long, dreary night, an odd, hard light gleaming in her eyes.

That morning the market opened firm; Net Common was in demand at one hundred and nineteen, an advance of two points overnight; Bennington Fours had dropped four points, to fifty-five.

Belden smiled grimly, as he scanned the opening prices on the tape. To his ears the gossip of the ticker was sweet music; everything was going as he had

wished. Nothing could be better, from his point of view.

He was an undersized man, dark, wizened and by no means affable; his business associates disliked him with rare heartiness and unanimity—and masked their dislike; just as the Street cordially hated him—and kept its knife out of sight, behind its back. His name was not savory, but it was a power in the financial world; the respect which was not given him personally, was more or less cheerfully accorded to his genius, his infinite generalship.

He dropped the paper ribbons into the ticker basket, and began to pace up and down the length of his private office, with a stealthy, catlike tread, glancing from side to side with something furtive in his manner. His hands were clasped behind his back, and he allowed his head to droop as he chuckled sourly.

Tausig, his partner, read the covert triumph in Belden's manner, and himself consulted the tape. He likewise smiled a broad, contented smile, as he turned away from the basket; but a moment later he began to think.

"Belden," he began, aggressively. He was his partner's precise antithesis—a heavy, rotund, red-faced, "pushing" type.

"Eh?" Belden desired to know, stopping and facing him.

Tausig doffed his aggressiveness under that searching scrutiny. "How much higher are you going to let Net go?" he inquired, with plaintive deference.

"Before I decide to liquidate?" asked Belden, leering. "Well, say one hundred and twenty-five, Tausig. Then we can begin to unload—quietly, you know—and besides, Bennington Fours will be down to fifty by that time."

Tausig sucked uneasily at an expensive cigar.

"I thought you said you would cash in this morning," he defended himself, surlily.

"I did, I did," squeaked Belden. "But things happen, you know. I've changed my mind; I think now it's safe to boost Net Common a little higher, and

to hold off on the bonds a wee bit longer."

"Why?" demanded Tausig, flatly. "There's West—"

"Haven't you heard the news?" Belden's tone was expressive of extreme surprise. "West's out of the running; we've got a clear track ahead of us."

"What struck West?" Tausig's small eyes widened.

"The sun struck West," sneered Belden. "He went away from here rather excited yesterday afternoon. He didn't seem to think I had treated him prettily. I suppose he ran around and got overheated—it's none of my business." Belden waved a deprecating hand, disclaiming responsibility. "But he's flat on his back, and the Street doesn't know why."

"Umm," Tausig mumbled his gratification. "And Hollwedel," he added, naming West's partner, "is a shrimp. He hasn't got the nerve to attempt reprisals, without West to back him up. That's very nice—very."

"Yes," Belden whined agreement; "and West won't get over fifty for his bonds—if I decide to allow him that."

He sidled over to the ticker, and fondled the tape. "One hundred and twenty," he announced, drearily. "You see, Tausig, how the Street believes in me." He laughed nastily. "Send out orders to sell ten thousand when we strike twenty-five," he added. "Sell 'em in thousand-share lots, you know—one lot to a broker."

Tausig arose and waddled out, grinning. Belden resumed his pacing to and fro, scowling at the floor. Presently he stopped at the ticker again, and remained there, fingering the fast-flowing ribbon for several minutes, motionless as a statue. Then he scurried hastily over to his desk and pressed a little mother-of-pearl button on its edge.

"I want Mr. Chellborg," he snarled at the boy who answered his summons.

"Mr. Chellborg," he told one of his confidential brokers who presently appeared, "I want you to find out who is buying Bennington Fours, and—and who the devil is selling Net Common!"

The ticker chattered off the informa-

tion that somebody had sold "Net," five hundred shares at one hundred and nineteen; and somebody else had bought "B. Fours," eighty bonds at fifty-six. It was just half-past ten.

Just at that moment an obliging Central had established telephonic connection between the uptown branch near the Waldorf-Astoria of William Wise & Sons, bankers and brokers, and the main, downtown, office of the same concern. It was a fairly reputable house, one doing a large commission business through several branches, some of which, and in particular that one near the Waldorf, boasted a "special customers' room for ladies."

On the uptown end of the wire was a somewhat excited and excitable, but experienced, young man, who acted as manager of the branch office. He earnestly desired a word with the head of the firm, and was presently accommodated.

Just what he had to say is not of record, but his communication was received with attentive respect by Mr. William Wise, who at once consulted the ticker with an air of alarmed interest. Then he sat down and rocked in his desk chair, frowning at the ceiling, for the space of three minutes by the clock. After which he summoned his head bookkeeper and desired information.

"John," he inquired, "how much Net Common are we carrying for our personal account?"

He was told five thousand shares.

"I think," Wise meditated, after the clerk had departed, "that, all things considered, we may consider the rise in Net a thing of the past. We will sell before the break comes; and while we are about it, it might be a good scheme to lump in two or three thousand shares short."

And he telephoned the board member of the firm to that effect, using the firm's private wire to the Exchange floor and carefully modulating his voice so that no one but the man at the other end of the wire could possibly overhear his instructions.

Not wishing to alarm the market, and so lose the advantage of a few fractions of a point, he waited a reasonable period

of time—fully five minutes—in order to permit the board member to execute his orders, before advising the customers of the firm (confidentially, of course) to “unload on Net Common, and sell short for a quick break.”

In the meantime, Belden, having viewed with disgust his pet's loss of one point on a strong market, decided to boost the price a trifle—to give it a dose of tonic,” as Tausig put it. In order to accomplish his desire, Mr. Belden commissioned some twelve brokers who were accustomed to execute his orders without “giving up” the name of their principal, to sell Net Common in amounts varying from one hundred to one thousand shares; in all, twenty thousand. And at the same time he instructed an equal number of similarly trained traders to buy in a like manner—twenty thousand Net Common.

Barring untoward developments this transaction, by which Belden's right hand sold to Belden's left—a practice nicknamed “washing sales by match orders” by the Street, and ruled against by the governing committee—would have resulted in creating a general impression that Net Common was very greatly desired on all hands.

Unfortunately, just as this was initiated, Messrs. William Wise & Sons offered eight thousand Net Common; so that the supply exceeded the momentary demand, and the price inevitably “slumped.” Within the next ten minutes Mr. Wise's customers, acting on his kindly advice, dumped eleven thousand two hundred shares on the floor, causing a further decline. And a timid somebody unknown became scared and decided to sell, and somebody else came to the same conclusion, and yet another somebody caught the infection of distrust; the result being that Net Common was quoted at one hundred and thirteen.

Belden and Tausig, glued to the ticker's side by an invincible dismay, swore and considered ways and means by which they might “peg” the price; meaning, to fix it beyond possibility of further declines. But before they had time to make up their minds as to the wisest course to be pursued, Hollwedel,

board member of Hollwedel & West, amiably assaulted Net Common with a sandbag—ten thousand shares—which, landing in the midriff of Belden's “pet,” knocked out of it a deal of wind and four points from the market price. This, in its turn, had the effect of shaking out a large number of stop orders; whereupon the Street, in a fit of genuine hysterics, poured selling orders into the Exchange so furiously that the traders were stampeded and glad to get rid of Net Common at any old price; and everybody, including Belden and Tausig, swore amazedly to find that it was worth only one hundred and one.

And then, while this panicky feeling held, Hollwedel, having deftly covered through other brokers his ten thousand shorts, suddenly proclaimed with a loud voice that he had twenty-five thousand Net Common to dispose of.

It was as if a strong man, after a long and exhausting run, had abruptly been set upon by an ill-tempered person with an ax and a desire for the strong man's life. Net Common dropped like a log—Hollwedel selling and covering and selling again with most relentless activity.

About the New England Transit post on the Exchange floor men came to blows in their efforts to dispose of a stock for which, it seemed, no one had the slightest use in the world. And the carnage was fearful, and the shrieks of the wounded, the mangled and the dying could be heard as far uptown as the commission houses' branches in One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street.

Other securities, and especially the more weak ones, suffered proportionately because of the shock to public confidence. When the big clock in Trinity's tower boomed forth the hour of three, a long, deep sigh of relief, that was almost a gasp, went up from the nervous Street; Net Common was a-begging at eighty-three, but the floor of the Exchange was closed and there could be no more trading indulged in until ten o'clock the following morning. The “flurry” was over, for the day at least.

In the private office of Mr. Belden,

of Belden & Tausig, there was gloom. The two partners were limp and unhappy, facing each other across the basket that held miles and miles of paper tape stamped with the details of disaster well-nigh irreparable. Belden's sallow face was dark and forbidding; he kept a dogged silence while he conned the written reports of his lieutenants. Tausig, on the other hand, had lost a great deal of his ruddy, wholesome appearance, and he muttered curses automatically. Both had forgotten, for the time being, that there was such a security as Bennington Fours on the list. After a while, exasperated by Belden's continued reticence, Tausig snapped at him a question—for the hundredth time:

"Who did it?"

Belden glanced at him slowly, curiously.

"How do I know?" he asked. Tausig replied by a comprehensive anathema of Thomas West and all his works. Belden said, patiently: "It wasn't West, I tell you; he's out of his head."

"Then who was it?" howled Tausig. "Hollwedel?"

Belden shook his head.

"Hollwedel sold no more than half a dozen others," he answered. "Besides, he'd be afraid."

Tausig gathered himself together, his big frame shaking with emotion. He waved an impotent fist in the air, and there were tears in his eyes, as he demanded—the one hundred and first time:

"Then who the hell was it?"

She had been preparing herself against it for ten long days, yet it was with a feeling akin to terror that Mrs. West saw Hollwedel shutting behind him the door to her husband's bedroom, when he made his first visit of condolence after he had received the news of his partner's misfortune.

He was a heavy man, not unlike Tausig in build; not quite as physically huge as West. If his spirit was a shrimp's, his appearance belied him. It is conceivable that Tausig, who but mirrored

the opinion of the Street, had been mistaken, that there was mettle in Hollwedel, despite the fact that he never acted on his own initiative; a circumstance for which Hollwedel sometimes accounted with characteristic frankness.

"My judgment's bad," he would explain, "I'm always splitting a pair of openers to draw to a bob-tail flush when I follow my own inclination. Now, West's different; seldom fizzles. Therefore, I permit him to play the game for the two of us. It's cheaper, that way."

Temporarily Mrs. West was afraid of Hollwedel; the man was frank, and might be counted upon to blurt out things which are preferably left unsaid. She considered him the last man of her acquaintance whom she would select to "break it gently" to anyone bereaved. And so thinking, she rose and made as though she would leave the two together—futilely, however.

"Mrs. West!" Hollwedel bowed. "Don't go, please," he added, almost pleadingly. And, "Stay with me, dear," West seconded, in a thin, brittle voice.

Perforce she yielded. She cast one imploring glance upon Hollwedel—which he failed to catch—and sat down very sedately, folding her hands in her lap and playing with her wedding ring, the while a nervous, diffident smile betrayed her inward agitation. Contrasted, the two men bulked big—even the convalescent, gaunt and haggard though he was, was massive and sturdy by her side, who seemed so frailly feminine. Anxiety and the wearing watches of long nights had wasted her.

To prove that he was not wholly down and out, West must needs rise from his invalid chair and advance to greet Hollwedel.

"Sit down, old man," he said, "and tell me all about it. You can't know how glad I am to see you. Tell me the truth—I can't get anything out of Bess or Dexter, beyond that 'it's all right,' and that you turned the tables on Belden in great shape. Tell me how you did it."

"Eh?" gasped Hollwedel. He sank into a chair with the air of an aston-

ished elephant; and looked confusedly at Mrs. West.

West's temper was worn thin by days of maddening iteration of the statement that he was too weak to talk about business.

"Don't say 'Eh!'" he cried, peevishly. "Man, I'm starving for news of the Street. Don't act as though—." He stopped, his eyes lighting savagely in their deep sockets. "My God!" he cried. "Have they lied to me? Isn't it true that Belden—"

"Belden," said Hollwedel, recovering hastily, "is meek as a little lamb. He's been taught a lesson all right, but—I didn't have much to do with it. I don't understand this." Indeed, he was evidently somewhat bewildered. "Hasn't Mrs. West told you—"

Mrs. West looked at him beseechingly; this time he saw it, and stopped agape.

"Why, I never suspected but that—" he blundered.

"I'll go mad—" West began, angrily.

His wife interrupted.

"Tell him all, Mr. Hollwedel," she said, faintly. "If you don't mind, Tom, I'll go—"

"No, stay!" he commanded. "There's something funny going on, and I propose to know what it is. Now, Hollwedel—"

Hollwedel stammered.

"Well, it isn't much," he said, "that I had to do with the deal," he added, hastily. "Matter of fact, I only acted as an agent, under orders. Of course, you understand, I thought they were your orders, and obeyed them implicitly."

"Orders?" queried West.

Mrs. West averted her face.

"I—I hope you won't be angry, Tom," she faltered, tremulously.

"I'll be angry if I don't get this straight from the beginning," said West. "Go on, Hollwedel. I promise to control myself and not to interrupt."

"Well," said Hollwedel; and stopped. "Well!" he plunged desperately at his narrative, "the morning after you were sunstruck, Mrs. West called at the office. Mind you, I hadn't any notion

that you were even ailing. She said that you had broken your arm—your right arm."

"Why?" demanded the startled convalescent.

"To explain why you couldn't send me written instructions, by your own hand," suggested Hollwedel.

"Yes," assented Mrs. West, timidly.

"And," the broker continued, "it was necessary to get around Belden. You had given her full details of how I was to go about the business. Mrs. West instructed me. I thought that it was mighty risky, but that made it seem all the more as though it came from you, West. It was a scheme to knock the bottom out of Net Common, in order to keep Belden on the anxious seat while we quietly bought up a majority of the Bennington Fours. I objected because we hadn't ready money enough to put it through, but Mrs. West overcame that by pledging her personal fortune to old Winant. That gave us enough to operate with."

"Bess," cried West, "you—you did that—"

"Wait!" advised Hollwedel. "You promised to go easy. Mrs. West started the ball rolling by going to Wise's uptown room and selling five hundred Net Common short. Inasmuch as you were known to have been conferring with Belden the day before, and Mrs. West being your wife, presumably taking a flyer for pin money on your advice, young Wise jumped at the conclusion that Net Common was due to break—just as we had figured he would. He telephoned his papa, and the Wise clique unloaded on the minute. That staggered Belden, and before he got over it, everybody was bearing Net. I sold ten thousand short, just to help things along, and Belden took the count. Then I soaked them with twenty-five thousand shares, and Net dropped like a sinker. She closed at eighty-three, with Belden choking to death; and we covered and cashed in to a beautiful tune."

"In the meantime, I'd been cabling the English investors for their Benningtons, and got a big block from over

there, besides what I picked up on the Street during the slump and while Belden was getting his second wind. Finally, I had corralled over half the bond issue, which Mrs. West and I locked up in our safe deposit vault. Pretty soon—day or two—Belden came around; said he'd reconsidered, that he'd take our block at the price agreed upon—eighty. I told him just how things stood. We held the majority of the Fours; but we didn't want them. We didn't care to foreclose. I told him he could have them at par. He swore he'd have your blood, West—and gave in. He had to. I don't know where he got the money, but I do know that we cleared nearly a million on the operation. And your wife's responsible."

Hollwedel stopped abruptly. Mrs. West started, and quivered a little with a fearful gladness—that she had done this thing for him, for her husband. But she feared to meet his eye. West remained still in his chair, staring at the ceiling. After a while—a tense, silent interval—he passed his hand over his eyes.

"My wife!" he said, softly, and arose. He took a step or two toward her, and paused. "A million!" he whispered. "Oh, good Lord!" He advanced until he towered above her, while she sat with bowed head and a film of dimness clouding her vision.

"My wife!" said West, breathlessly. "Bess—"

She looked up at him, her face shining.

"I—I had to, dear," she said. "I couldn't help it—things were so desperate. Something had to be done, and it seemed to me that you would have done just that."

"But—but how could you know how to flank Belden."

"How could I help knowing, Tom?" she defended herself. "For ten years you've been telling me just what to do—just how you were acting in similar emergencies. I didn't know it until the time came, but you've educated me thoroughly in the ways of the Street, dear, and the least I could do for you was to make use of the knowledge which you had given me!"

She broke off with a half sob. West stared, amazed.

"Do you mean," he stammered, a queer sensation as of choking obstructing his utterance. "Do you mean that just by talking to you in the mornings, sweetheart— But I never thought you cared—"

"Yes," she replied, vaguely.

Suddenly his arms were about her. Hollwedel heard him cry, brokenly, "Why, Bess!" And then Hollwedel went to the window, and stood there, looking out, for a long time.

## THE LOST POET

**H**E watched in silence while the gray years passed,  
And fashioned chains of tender thought to hold  
The guest that came not, till on life at last  
Each golden link was broken for its gold.

Then love belated came, and deep he drank,  
And asked not whence or what the goblet's shape,  
Till, draining life's red wine, content, he sank  
To sleep, and thought not once to sing the grape!

ARTHUR STRINGER.

# THE OTHER WOMAN'S DAUGHTER

By Dorothy Dix

THERE is no other topic in the world upon which Mrs. Blank is so fond of holding forth, upon occasion, as the subject of woman.

She belongs to numerous clubs designed to emancipate women from all the troubles of this life, and is pledged to a dozen Utopian schemes for the advancement of her sex along every line.

All of this is by way of theory. What is real and practical is that she has two sons whom she is raising up to be as selfish, overbearing and disagreeable a pair of boys as you could find in a Sabbath day's journey.

Not long ago Maud and I were two of a little group of women who were witnesses to one of those little *contretemps* that will occur to the best regulated theorists. We were at Mrs. Blank's, and in the midst of one of her most eloquent flights upon the down-trodden condition of women, and their duty to stand by one another, one of her sons came into the room. He rudely walked over one of the ladies' feet, and without so much as a nod of greeting or removing his hat, or a word of apology, he whispered some request to his mother. She evidently refused, for he flung himself out of the room with a scowl and a sneer, saying, in the most contemptuous tones: "That's just like a woman! Never knows her mind two minutes at a time."

After he was gone we all looked a little blankly at each other, and his mother murmured some indistinct excuse about his not meaning it, and a mother knowing how to make allowances, and so on.

"Oh, of course," the other women chorused, hypocritically; but I, thank

Heaven, have the courage of my convictions, and I turned to our hostess.

"That is very true, as you say, Mrs. Blank," I said; "mothers don't mind, and they do know how to make excuses for their children's shortcomings. But what about the other woman's daughter? Don't you ever think about her?"

"The other woman's daughter? What do you mean?" cried Mrs. Blank.

"I mean," replied I, "the woman that some time your son is going to marry, whose future lies entirely in your hands, and who is going to be happy or miserable, all the days of her married life, just exactly in proportion as you raise your son to be thoughtful, gentle and considerate, or selfish and overbearing and tyrannical. I have a little daughter, you know, and I'm interested in her having a husband who has been properly brought up."

"I never thought—" began Mrs. Blank.

"Of course you didn't," I agreed, cheerfully. "That's the trouble. We never do. We get together in conventions, and we pass beautiful resolutions, saying that women ought to stand by each other and all that, and we present each other with engrossed and illuminated copies, but we never take the trouble to look out for the individual woman to see what we can do towards making her life pleasanter, and happier, and easier. Least of all do we look out for that other woman's daughter for whom we are raising a husband. Now, I am not saying a word against the men. I love 'em, God bless 'em, but the average man is a long way from realizing the ideal he ought to come up to as a hus-

band. And as a general thing his sins are more of omission than commission. More homes are broken up through bad temper than through drink. More love is killed by coldness and neglect than through treachery. A man oftener wounds his wife's feelings through carelessness than through brutality. The dear, blundering fellow goes along trampling down the finest flowers that bloom in a woman's soul, just through sheer stupidity, and nine times out of ten it is his mother's fault, because she didn't teach him the things he ought to have known.

"I believe that it is just as much every mother's duty to train her sons to be good husbands, as it is their father's to teach them some honest business, and it seems to me that nowhere else in our whole lives do we fail as signally in our obligations to other women, as right here. We know as certainly as we can know anything in this world, that when our children are grown they are going to be married, yet we treat it as if it were such a remote contingency there was no use in preparing for it. The result is a boomerang that comes back and slays us.

"I foist my daughter, whom I haven't taught a single thing on earth about housekeeping, or domestic science, or anything that goes to the ordering and upbuilding of a happy and prosperous home, on your son, who is just as ignorant, and untaught, and undisciplined in everything that goes to his part of the contract, and then we mothers, who would give our heart's blood to save them a single pang, must stand aside and look helplessly on while they flounder, and sometimes perish in the quicksands of married life. And, oh! the pity of it; all the time there was a safe way around the danger, if only we who have been over the road before them had taken the trouble to show them the path.

"The mistake we make in married life is in depending on inspiration, instead of preparation. It is undoubtedly true that every now and then we are inspired to do the right thing, the kind thing, the loving thing; just as every now and then we feel particularly in the humor

for doing a big day's work; but if we only labored on the occasions when we felt a special inspiration we should starve to death in the between times, and it is even so in married life. Many and many a woman's heart starves to death between the spasmodic exhibitions of her husband's affection. What makes for prosperity and happiness, is the even, sustained, everyday attention to business, in love as well as work.

"I suppose there has always got to be a different point of view in the way a man looks at his duty to his wife and the way she looks at it. If a man provides his wife with a good home, and pays her bills with a reasonable amount of grumbling he considers that he has done his full duty by her, and that she is an unreasonable crank if she wants anything else. Moreover, he considers, as a general thing, that that gives him liberty to do as he pleases at home, and to inflict on his family all the bad temper and bad manners that the rest of the world would send him to Coventry for if he displayed them in public.

"What the woman wants is love—not love that is taken for granted—but that assures her daily and hourly of its existence in words and caresses; she wants sympathy and understanding, and if a man will give her these she will let him starve her, and beat her, and mistreat her, and yet follow him through the world as humbly and loyally as a dog follows his master.

"I can tell you one thing, and that is if the women ever have a hand in making the laws there will be a mighty shaking up of the things for which divorces are granted, and about the chief indictment on the docket will be for bad temper and sullenness.

"Personally, and I believe ninety-nine women out of a hundred will agree with me, I would rather be married to a man who came home drunk once a month, and gave me a good beating, and was pleasant and agreeable the balance of the time, than to be married to one of the impeccable saints we all know, who sit up in the amen corner at church, and lead the temperance rally, and who, three hundred and sixty-five days in the

year, show their families nothing but a face so sour that it curdles every particle of the milk of human kindness in the neighborhood.

"I used to visit a place where such a man was at the head of the family. He would come to breakfast in the morning with a face shadowed in gloom. The children would hush their gay prattle, as if they had been smitten dumb, and his wife's hand would tremble on the tablecloth, but she was a woman of invincible courage, and she tried to make the best of it.

"She would greet him with a smile: 'The paper is right by your plate,' she would say. 'Um, hum,' he would grunt. 'Will you have your coffee now, or wait until you have looked over the headlines?' she would go on. 'Um, hum,' he would scowl. 'I think I will go downtown this morning. Would you like me to look for that book you wanted?' she would pursue with angelic sweetness. 'Uh, huh,' he would snarl; and that was all she ever got out of him.

"That woman lived with that man for twenty-five years, and stood that every day without once revenging herself. History may have records of greater heroism, or more sustained self-control; but I never heard of them, and wouldn't believe them if I had.

"Now, when that man died, the papers printed eulogies of him, and the preacher referred to him as a model husband and father; but he wasn't. He might have violated every law of God and man, and have been a better one. In all the years that they were married I doubt if he ever gave his wife a single loving word or a kiss that wasn't a kind of dry display of duty that is ten times more offensive than none at all. He never showed her any sympathy, or ten-

derness, and the mere fact that he provided her with clothes and a place to sleep and eat didn't make him a good husband, and it doesn't make any other man a good husband. The things of the spirit are eternally more than meat and raiment to every woman.

"I dare say in that man's case, as in nearly every other one, he was utterly and entirely ignorant that he wasn't doing his whole duty, and that is just where my contention comes in that it was his mother's fault, and she was the one who really sinned against the other woman's daughter.

"For she knew. She knew how a woman feels, and she was morally bound to protect that sensitiveness against being unduly trampled upon. Say what you will, we all know that in the end what influences our everyday life is not the abstract theories of right and wrong we think out, but it is the way we have been reared, the manners that were ground into us as children, the beliefs, the faiths, the ideals, that were held unfaltering before us from the very time we were conscious of anything.

"And you may depend upon it that the boy who is taught a delicate chivalry towards the women of his own family is not going to bulldoze some woman who has the luck to marry him; the boy who is taught respect for his mother is not going to insult and sneer at the woman who is his wife; the boy who is taught that his sisters have just as much right to the family finances and to be independent in money as he has, is not going to make his wife come to him like a beggar every time she wants a dollar.

"It is utterly and entirely possible for us to provide the next generation of women with such husbands, and that is what I mean by doing our duty to the other woman's daughter."



# A SIGN FROM HEAVEN

By Alison E. Coates

"LAND o' the livin'!" mentally ejaculated Mrs. Mehitable Mason, hastily withdrawing her hands from the tub of the last rinse. "If there ain't Cap'n Simeon Tanner! What under the sun—hayin' time, too!"

Capt. Simeon, clad in his Sunday best, deliberately descended from his trifling antiquated, but well-preserved and entirely respectable, phaeton, tied his fat bay mare in the shade of an apple tree, and with a loud and peremptory knock, presented himself at the side door.

A person of prestige, this Capt. Simeon, the prestige of faculty and thrift, of broad acres, and snug bank accounts. A proper nice man, and a man greatly looked up to, his admiring friends would have asserted; and then they would have proudly added that he was dreadful young looking for sixty-seven, and hadn't a gray hair in his head.

Not without reason, it will thus be seen, was Mrs. Mason, as she would have expressed it, "awful illustrated." Nevertheless, having first released her silvery forelocks from the durance of crimping pins, and slipped on a clean gingham apron, she bravely determined to rise to the occasion, and carry it off with the utmost nonchalance possible.

"Why, how do you do, Cap'n Tanner?" she cordially cried, extending a moist and shriveled hand. "Well, you've ketched me in the suds this time! Serves me right for bein' washin' Wednesday, I s'pose you'll say. But Sunday night my niece, Emeline Stebbins, an' three children, drove over from Sydney, an' stayed till yesterday afternoon. I couldn't 'tend to it so well, with them 'round; an' then I thought I might's

well wait an' clean up ev'rything to once. There'll be things, you know."

"Certain," concurred the captain.

"Walk right in, into the settin' room," hospitably pursued Mrs. Mason, furtively smoothing her fuzzy friz, as she led the way. "Take the rockin'-chair, there by the winder, do."

Having first carefully deposited his broad-brimmed Panama hat upside down, and exactly in the middle of the checker-board pattern center piece of the red and white cotton table cover, where it was flanked by a diminutive photograph album, a red morocco-covered pocket Bible, a file of *Zion's Tidings*, and an antique blue tea saucer, filled with advertising cards, the captain, with equal care and precision, deposited his rotund person in the inviting receptacle indicated.

"Hot!" he emphatically declared, mopping his beaded brow with a gay bandanna; but he stated the exasperating fact in the highest of good humor and without a suggestion of malice.

"It is so," agreed his hostess; whereupon she sprang to the tall cherry case of drawers in the corner, and whisked from one of its recesses a cylindric something, which to the captain's unsophisticated eyes, looked a sort of colossal firecracker, but from whose mysterious interior, by what appeared nothing less than a feat of legerdemain, she swiftly unfurled an innocent disk of painted paper. "Have a fan, do," she kindly proposed. "My gran'daughter, way out in Kansas, sent that to me; but I don't never carry it, on account of its bein' red; 'twouldn't be suitable."

Evidently the captain had come visiting. He launched into lengthy remi-

niscences of the heated terms of by-gone years. He discussed the quantity and quality of the hay crop. He lamented the shortcomings and long-goings of the average farm hand of the present degenerate times. He compared the relative advantages and disadvantages of letting by the job and hiring by the day. He reviewed events current in the community. He canvassed the state of the local church, in which both himself and the worthy woman whom he addressed—the one in his way, the other in hers—were bright and shining lights.

And while the unheeding old captain talked, and talked, and dried his often oozing brow with many a flirt and flutter of his gay bandanna, and waved the foolish little fan of the Kansas lassie's unfitting choice, the day waxed toward its full. Eleven of the clock rang relentlessly. The half hour sounded.

"If you'll excuse me," apologetically ventured Mrs. Mason. "I've got two or three more pieces to wring out."

"Oh, certain, certain! Don't let me hender you, mom."

"I guess it is gettin' to be about dinner time, too," tentatively added the uncertain housewife.

"Don't put yourself out," considerately begged the gallant captain.

"Spry as a cat," approvingly noted the captain, as the slender woman, girlish of shape and light of foot—the door between sitting room and kitchen having been left companionably open—speeding her labors of hospitality, now and again swiftly crossed his range of vision.

In an incredibly short time, attired, now, in the neatest and freshest of silver-gray prints, and the most immaculate of tucked and lace-trimmed white aprons, her before hastily dressed foretop slicked into waves of admirable smoothness, her delicate old cheeks like two soft pink roses—observing which charming color the captain's approbation rose yet another point, while to himself he silently remarked: "I van, if any other woman wouldn't look like a biled lobster, scurryin' round an' stewin' over the stove, such weather's this!"—the impromptu hostess smilingly reappeared at the open door.

"Walk right out, Cap'n Tanner," she cordially invited. "Of course, if I'd known you'd b'en comin'——"

"Don't say another word, Mis' Mason; don't make no excuses. I dun know how you can keep so clean, Mis' Mason," beaming around the tidy kitchen, from the shining little cook stove to the snowy cloth and smoking viands of the waiting board. "So-phrony, now, she's droppin' an' spillin' from mornin' till night. Seems as if I can't stir without steppin' into somethin'."

"Come right 'long, Tommy," affably called Mrs. Mason, to the carrot-headed, freckled-faced urchin discovered standing in the adjoining scullery, known, in the parlance of the house, as the "sink room," and shifting, uncertainly, from one bare grimy foot to the other; "victuals taste better when everybody eats to once. Will you ask a blessin', Cap'n Tanner?" interrogating the visitor, with sudden and profound solemnity.

Promptly, and with great unction, the captain invoked the benediction of Heaven, not only upon the ceremony of the hour; but, evidently recognizing the wideness of God's mercy to be as "the wideness of the sea," besought that His grace might rest upon the household, the community, the church, the country, the poor, the sick, the suffering, the sinning everywhere, in short, the world at large, and finally and especially upon divers antipodean missions, instituted for the evangelization of heathendom.

"Twas the longest-winded one t' ever I heard," subsequently averred Tommy Tuttle; "thought I should ha' gone off o' the hook, sure pop."

"How good your ham's kep', Mis' Mason," complimented the captain, stepping dexterously down to things mun-dne; "tender's a chicken. Our'n's dryer'n a chip; hangs 'n the cellar way, too.

"No, no, mom," with a negative shake of his head. "I like cucumbers, but I can't chaw 'em as they ought' to be; my teeth, you know. Mary Libbie keeps teasin' me to have some false ones. But I dun know, I dun know; looks like a great undertakin'. Beats all what a

natural-lookin' set you've got, Mis' Mason. I shouldn't mistrust but what they'd grew right 'n your own head; an' the way you can gnaw round a corncob with 'em does beat all my first wife's relation.

"That's what I call a biscuit, now! Don't see no such biscuit as that over to my house. I get the best of ev'rything to do with; but Sophrony don't seem to have no knack. Some women can cook; an' some can't.

"Minute puddin'! I declare for it, if it don't make my mouth water jest to look at it! I dun know's I've tasted of a minute puddin' sence Mis' Tanner died. Always was my favorite. Goes to the spot, soused up with this beautiful sweetened cream, eh, bub?" with a facetious wink in the direction of Master Tommy.

"Yes, sir," mumbled that voracious youngster, his mouth crammed with the glutinous compound.

"Well, I'm glad if you can make out, I'm sure," smilingly derogated Mrs. Mason. "Emeline's children et me all out of pie an' cake. 'Twas, 'Aunt Hitty, I want a piece o' this,' an' 'Aunt Hitty, can't I have a piece o' that?' day in an' day out. They're growin' pretty fast now. Have a cookie, Cap'n Tanner, do," proffering a plate containing not less than two dozen most inviting specimens of that pleasing eatable, cut in the design of a star, each with a raisin imbedded in its center, and having its top profusely sanded with granulated sugar. "I baked these while my clo'es was boilin'."

Dinner over, the table cleared, the dishes—their washing awaiting the company's departure—neatly stacked in the sink, guest and hostess were again cozily ensconced in the sitting-room rockers, the gayly caparisoned table between them.

Following a distinctly perceptible pause in the hitherto brisk flow of conversation, and beginning with a loud and portentous "Ah-hem-m-m!" said the captain, "I ain't one to beat about the bush, Mis' Mason. You know what I be, an' you know what my situation is, in ev'ry particular. I come over to-day

to ask you to marry me. Can't you fetch it round pretty soon after hayin', mom?"

"Why—Cap'n—Tanner!" gasped the astonished woman, her pretty pink color a sudden scorching flame, her gentle blue eyes a-swim behind their gold-bowed spectacles. "I—nev'er—mis-trusted—such a thing. I thank you, sir, I'm sure," at length remembering her manners; "but I never thought I should marry again."

"Felt jest so myself," agreed the no whit disconcerted captain. "Remember the day Mis' Tanner was buried, after we got back from the grave, Mary Libbie come an' set down in my lap, an' put her arms round my neck, an' her head down on my shoulder, tears a-streamin', an' says she, 'Pa, I want you to promise me that you won't never marry again.' Says I, 'You needn't worry yourself, daughter. I've had one good wife; an' I don't never want another. I wouldn't marry the best woman in the hull State o' Connecticut.'"

"I'm sure, I shouldn't wish to go where I wa'n't wanted," frigidly interrupted Mrs. Mason.

"Oh! that's all right. Mary Libbie was up yesterday, an' she foller'd out where I was feedin' the turkeys, an' says she, 'Pa, it's time things was dif'rent; you must break up this fall, an' come an' live with me, an' I'll do ev'rything I can to make it pleasant.' Says I, 'No, mom; never, while my name is Simeon Tanner, do I set down in no son-in-law's chimney corner. Not but what William's a nice man,' says I, 'an' you're all the child I've got in the world, an' I set my eyes, an' more, by the young ones; but as long as I'm above ground, I cal'late to keep my own home, in-de-pend-ent.' Says she, 'Well, pa, actually, it's enough to make a hog sick, the way Sophrony Higgins keeps your house. Turn her off, an' get somebody else.' 'Who is somebody?' says I. 'There 'tis,' says she; 'there ain't anybody. If you're bound to stay here, pa, there ain't nothin' for it but you must marry again.' 'Pick me out a woman,' says I. 'Well,' says she, kinder cogertatin' round, 'there's Mis' Mason. She's about the

nicest woman I know of; an', as fur as anything I can see, it would be perfectly suitable, on both sides.' Says I, 'Mary Libbie, I b'lieve you've hit the nail on the head. She's jest what I want; an', I van, I'll ask her before I'm a day older.' There! There's for you, Mis' Mason! Now, what do you answer, Mis' Mason?" demanded the triumphant old captain.

"My sons is very anxious for me to come out West," replied Mrs. Mason, waiving the matrimonial question with an assumption of maternal duty.

"Don't you do it, Mis' Mason, don't you do it! 'Tain't no place for you out West—Injuns, an' cowboys, an' rattlesnakes, an' grasshoppers, an' cyclones, an' blizzards, an' fever 'n' ager, an' dretful drinkin' water, an' strange folks, an' unfamiliar customs. Tanner hill's the location for you, mom. You know what my house is, an' you know how it's furnished; an' when anything wears out, I expect to replace it. Mis' Tanner always give me the name o' bein' a good provider. I ain't one to tie a woman down to salt pork, an' corned beef, an' codfish. I never go over to Oakville without fetchin' home a piece o' fresh meat; an' I don't begrudge chickens in the season on 'em, nor a good hen no time o' year. I'm willin' to buy all kinds o' spices, an' condiments, an' all the new-fashioned things—this scraped-up cocoanut, an' ev'rything you can think of. I like to see a woman dressed up about so, too. As long as she was able to go out, Mis' Tanner was never without a good black silk dress; an' when she died, 'twas fit to put right on, an' bury her in, without a stitch took in it. An' her bunniit done over ev'ry season, or more likely'n not a new one, an' cloaks, an' furs, an' kid gloves, an' parasols, an' shoes, an' rubbers, an' cotton cloth to make up, an' trimmin's for the same; an' I always stood ready to foot the bills. Then, Mis' Tanner always had the butter money, an' the aigg money for any little superfluities, or to lay up, or to do anything she was a min' to; I never asked no questions; an' so can you, too. A woman's likely to have a

call for a dollar most any day—to make up a present for the minister's wife, or join the missionary society, or somethin' or other—an' I don't want no wife o' mine runnin' to me to know if she can, as if she dassent say her soul was her own. It makes a man appear small. I should expect you to have help for house cleanin', an' makin' soap, an' hayin' time, an' butcherin' an' pickin' poultry, an' I'll hire the washin' done ev'ry week, if you say so. You shall have a good burial—laid to rest beside your first husban', if you so desire—an' a han'some pair o' marble gravestuns erected to your memory, at my expense. If you outlive me, you shall be paid two hundred an' fifty dollars a year"—the captain enunciated it very distinctly, in the high, public-functionary tone of one reading a testamentary document—"two hundred an' fifty dollars a year," he repeated, "as long as you remain my widder."

Even though sued upon such magnificent terms as these, the poor lone widow, incredible as it may appear, still, to adopt the captain's phrase, "hung back."

"I tell you what 'tis, Mis' Mason," burst forth the captain, hitching his chair around the corner of the table, and leaning eagerly forward, "I ain't one to stan' for a few dollars, where *momentous* issues is involved. For a clincher, I'll say two hundred an' seventy-five, *two hundred an' seventy-five dollars a year*, as long as you remain my widder. Ain't that fair?"

"Oh, yes, yes, Cap'n Tanner! It's all anybody could ask for, an' more, too. But seems so I don't know what to say; seems so I don't know what I ought to say. I'm struck all of a heap."

The captain knit his brow in deep thought. He was used to getting what he wanted, and getting it, too, without parley or delay.

"Well, well," he presently humored. "I s'pose it's come rather sud'n (didn't 'pear to be no need o' poll-parrotin' round, at our ages; we couldn't afford the time," with a chuckle at his own wit); "an' you've got all kinder nerved up. Think it over, calm like, an' com-

posed. Sleep on it. I've got to go over to Oakville, with my butter, in the mornin', anyhow; an' I'll drive 'round, an' see what you say. 'Twon't hender me much. But such an offer's this ain't shook off of ev'ry bush, if I do say it, Mis' Mason."

"Oh, I know it, Cap'n Tanner; I know it! You are just as good as you can be. If I could feel sure I was doin' right, an' twould all turn out well, an' I should give satisfaction."

"You go long, Mis' Mason!" jocularly cried the captain. "I'll take the resk o' that. Fact is, Mis' Mason, we both on us need somebody to see to us. 'Tain't right for you to be livin' here so. You're liable to be took with a shock, or somethin'; took'n in the night, too. You're gettin' long, Mis' Mason, 's well 's myself. Not so fur, of course, of course not so fur," the captain made haste to add.

"Sixty-four, last March," frankly admitted Mrs. Mason.

"Possible! Well, women folks can get along by themselves a spell; but there comes a time when they need a man. Things has to be looked after. Now, if you was goin' to stay here, the ruff ough' to be shingled before cold weather. Your old mare's about played out, an' there never was a woman in the hull round world—I don't care if 'twas Queen Victory herself—that could trade horses without gettin' cheated. That Tuttle boy's goin' to get too big for his pants, pretty soon, too; I see it'n his eye. An' so on, an' so forth. The same may be said, in dif'rent ways, in respect to men folks. Goodness knows what I've put up with, with hired housekeepers—wastin', an' slovenness, an' incompetence in gen'ral. In view of all the attendin' circumstances I do truly believe it to be our joint an' sev'ral duty, Sister Mason, to lock han's, an' smooth each other's pathway to the tomb. For this, perhaps," went on the captain, waxing eloquent with his theme, his tone and manner taking on the hortatory fervor with which he was wont to admonish and encourage his brethren in the weekly prayer meeting, "for this, perhaps, was we bereft of own de-ah-r

companions. The dispensations of Providence is, indeed, mysterious, an pa-ah-st findin' out. Well," resuming his colloquial voice, and rising, and taking his hat, "I must be goin' now. I'll be 'round in the mornin', by eight o'clock. Good-day, mom."

"Good-day, Cap'n Tanner."

Ten minutes later, Mrs. Mason was kneeling before the cook stove, her lips pursed, her flushed cheeks distended, while, with the breath of her life, she vigorously endeavored to coax into a potent flame the reluctant fire she had just succeeded in calling into existence; for the kettle must be made to boil, and the dishes must be washed.

A mountain of feminine flesh darkened the doorway, while a wheezy voice gasped forth, "Aft'noon, Mis' Mason."

The voice belonged to Mrs. Johnson, whose poor little abode lay a few hundred yards up the ascending ground, which the highway began to take after passing Mrs. Mason's humble door.

"I thought I'd step in a minute. Shouldn't s'pose you'd find it any great of a job to get a fire goin', with a spark in the wind. He! he! he! No 'fense, Mis' Mason. I couldn't help seein' who jest drove off. I must say some folks is lucky. You'll have ev'rything to do with, Mis' Mason. Well, there, I do most begrudge you your chance! Lord knows, I don't want Darius to die; but I should like to know, for once in my life, how 'twould seem to have things jest flowin' in."

Mrs. Johnson's "minute" grew to an hour; but, at last, she had gone, and Mrs. Mason had her dish washing fairly under way, when, lifting her eyes to the window, she beheld a black-coated figure striding solemnly front-doorward.

"Mercy upon me, if there ain't the minister!"

The pastoral call proved a lengthy one.

"Well, Sister Mason," with a ponderous attempt at facetiousness, remarked the clergyman, as he finally extended his hand in parting, "I suspect your text to-day is, 'He that giveth her in marriage doeth well.' Truly," he hastened to add, resuming the gravity of his sol-

emm calling, "truly do we discern how all things work together for good to those who love the Lord. I wish you joy, Sister Mason. I know your larger opportunities and ampler means will all be consecrated to the use of Him, whose we are, and whom we serve."

"Dish water stun cold," reflected Mrs. Mason, when her spiritual adviser had departed. "Guess I might's well go an' get supper now, an' then clean up ev'rything to once. I promised Tommy I'd have it early; an' it's most night, anyway."

"Hit! *Hi-i-it!*"

Mrs. Mason peered through the fly-netting at the pantry window.

"Lucindy Walls! I might 'a' known nobody else could screech like that. If I hadn't as lives see the Old Harry himself. She's got holt o' somethin', I know, by the looks of her."

"No, I won't come in," when her kinswoman appeared, announced Cousin Lucinda, a sharp-tongued spinster of sixty frosty winters. "There ain't nothin', under the sun, that this pesky ol' horse'll stand hitched to. I've b'en over to the mill after a grist for Jeremiah; he wanted me to, he had so much hay down. Well, Mehit, you've done it, at last; set yourself plump int' the butter tub."

"I ain't set myself into nothin'," de-nied the usually dovelike Mrs. Mason, with unprecedented asperity; "an' I'd thank folks to mind their own business. I don't know, for my part, how it's got out so quick, anyway."

Cousin Lucinda nodded sagaciously in the direction of Master Tommy, who now, to borrow a nautical phrase, was sighted in the offing, driving the cow home from pasture, and lustily caroling a Sankey hymn, with an air of celestial abstraction. "Little pitchers has long ears! Tommy Tuttle's Tommy Tattle, I guess. Anyhow, I heard it over to the mill."

"Well, there ain't nothin' to it, yet; an' I don't think there will be," protested Mrs. Mason.

"Mehitable Mason, have you took leave o' your senses?" sternly demanded Cousin Lucinda. "Worth fifteen thou-

san' dollars, if he's worth a red cent; first selec'man, an' a pillar in the church. I only wish I had the chance! But I'll risk you, Mehit. You ain't quite so big a fool. Well, I must be movin'. Get up, ol' buckskin. If you don't invite me to the weddin', you'll hear from the printer," screamed back Lucinda, over her shoulder, as she clattered away, in a cloud of dust.

The long, weariful, distracting day was over at last. Tommy had departed for a night's visit in his father's house; and Mrs. Mason had locked the world out, and herself in—in, to the awful hour of decision.

"Oh, dear!" she wailed, entering the sitting room, and flinging herself down in the little rocker, before the red-covered table, "was ever a poor creatur' so hounded as I've b'en to-day? Ev'rybody aiggin' me on, an' seemin' to think I ought to jump at the chance, an' I don't know what to do, no more than an old Tabby cat; an' only twelve hours to come before the old feller'll be settin' there in that chair, facin' me up for an answer. Oh, Dan'el, Dan'el, what shall I do?"

With this piteous cry into that merciless silence which separates the living from the dead, the poor, perplexed old woman's thoughts flew back to the sparkling winter's night, now more than forty and five years past, when young Daniel Mason, with his dashing new cutter and his flying roan colt, had driven her home from singing school, and to the music of the jingling bells had asked her to be his wife. Instantly, unquestioningly, joyfully, with the blessed, and beautiful, and perfect love of youth, which casteth out fear, and doubt, and consideration, she had given herself.

"No, Dan'el," she went on, apostrophizing, "I didn't want a minute to think o' that. 'Twould have killed me not to. An' we was always so happy, Dan'el, even if we didn't get ahead much. I never meant to marry again; an' I don't want to; an' I won't; so, there! An' the old cock-a-doodle can go to grass with his two hundred an' seventy-five dollars a year. Thinks he could have the world for the askin'. Do

him good to get took down a peg. Here's where you brought me, Dan'el, an' here we lived together, an' here our children was born; here we took comfort, an' see trouble sometimes, an' worked hard always. I picked huckleberries an' sold to buy that table spread. I bought this rockin'-chair with money I earned weavin' a rag carpet for Cap'n Tanner's first wife." (In point of fact, Capt. Tanner's first wife had, thus far, been his only wife.) "There ain't a room in the house but what I've papered, an' painted, an' whitewashed, an' scrubbed, an' scoured, with my own hands. I love ev'ry board o' the old shanty, an' ev'ry rag an' stick that's inside of it; an' here I shall stay, dear Dan'el, till I'm called to join you, in a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens— Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I thought 'twas all settled; but 'tain't. Things keep comin' to mind. What shall I do? What shall I do?"

The glance of the tormented woman chanced to fall upon the little red-covered Bible, lying on the table. The book was a gift from Daniel, made during the time of their betrothal.

An inspiration came to her. She had heard of people in perplexity opening the Scriptures at random, and finding, in the passage thereof upon which their undirected eyes might alight, a way out of all their difficulty. She would try it. She snatched off her gold-bowed spectacles, substituted therefor a pair less showy in appearance, but of greater magnifying power, parted the leaves of the diminutive volume, held close to the lamp a page of its microscopic print, and these are the words which she read: "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass."

"Oh!" she cried, aghast, "to think that I hadn't thought o' that. A professor for more than forty years, an' not to have thought o' that. Oh, what a sinful worm I be! How have I denied the Lord that bought me."

In a torrent of sudden tears, the penitent fell upon her knees beside the little rocker, and bowed her head upon its crazy-patch-work covered cushion.

"Oh, my Heavenly Father," sobbed the suppliant, "have mercy upon me. An' concernin' this great an' mighty matter proposed by Thy honored servant, Brother Tanner, I do here, an' now, commit my way to Thee. If it be Thy will that I should say unto Thy honored servant Yea, let the sun shine forth in its glory; but if it be Thy will that I should answer him Nay, cause the rain to descend—not, as Thou well knowest, oh, Lord, that rain would stop Simeon Tanner; but that I, poor, feeble, falterin', undiscernin' creatur', may know an' do Thy blessed will."

The erstwhile distracted woman arose from her knees at peace. The burden of indecision had rolled away. Her heart was stayed in perfect trust. She lifted up her quavering voice, and smote the stillness with a song of triumph and deliverance:

"Have we trials and temptations,  
Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged,  
Take it to the Lord in prayer."

When Mrs. Mason had put out her lamp, she drew wide apart the snowy sash curtains at the unshuttered window of her bedroom, a window which looked toward the sunrise.

"I shall know just as soon as it's day," she reflected, in comforting certainty. Then—her silvery foretop having been securely wound in crimping pins—with her pretty old cheek resting in her palm, she straightway fell asleep, as peacefully as a child hushed in its mother's arms.

It was hours before Mrs. Mason awoke. The sun, well above the horizon, was streaming across her face in a flood of golden splendor.

"How late I've slept," she marveled, with a start. Then, "Oh!" in sudden remembrance, she cried aloud. "Why it's a *beautiful* day;" and it was not without a thrill of exultation that she believed that Heaven had called her to become mistress of the big white house on Tanner hill, a house with a bay window, a piazza, a body Brussels carpet on the parlor, and black walnut suites in both front chambers.

# IN AT THE DEATH

By Lucia Chamberlain

**T**HEFT was the cause of the insult. It happened in this wise. But remember—while I am far from applauding the theft, I consider what followed not only unwarranted, but absurd.

I would say impossible, but that the people most closely interested saw it with their own eyes, and it was common gossip for all the tea tables, and doubled the space the "Town Letter" devotes to personals for weeks to follow. Since it is history now, I set it down, to explain what has never yet been explained.

This befell at the last assembly of the "Tuesday Cotillion," in the weeks following Lent. In the beginning of the lantern figure Matt Nevin and Christopher Nicholls changed from opposite sides of the room to a focus halfway down the semicircle. This focus was Miss Sally Pennon.

Nevin arrived a neck ahead—everyone in the set saw that, and by every unwritten law of cotillions she should have danced with him. But whether because fate, subtly directed by the hands of hostesses, had placed Miss Pennon and Nevin too often together at the season's dinners, and the "Town Letter" had noted the fact a little too blithely, or whether the unimpressionable and irrepressible Nicholls was rendered more desirable by difficulty—however that be, in direct defiance of her reputation for "fairness," when Nicholls smiled at her and lifted an inquiring eyebrow, she answered that smile, and whirled away on his arm, leaving the deserted one doubly outraged by the "next time" she threw over her shoulder, as she slipped past him.

Pink with irritation, Nevin watched, from his place, one chair down from Nicholls', the victor steer his capture round the room. In the whispers and side glances of a few he saw the attention of many, and in so doing undoubtedly saw double.

The reserved smile of Sally's cotillion partner, a tall lieutenant of cavalry, added fuel. But when Nicholls, having emphasized his triumph by making himself and his partner the last couple off the floor, returning to his place, directed at Matt a derisive smile, violent irritation was transformed to indiscriminate fury. As Christopher Nicholls sat, Matt, with one adroit movement, withdrew his chair, and caused his rival to seat himself with state and circumstance upon the floor.

A sound like a pistol shot arrested the room. Men sprang to their feet, the violins hesitated in the second bar of a waltz, and trailed off into silence. The smokers, rushing in from the dressing room, saw women, with their hands to their ears, scattered or huddled, and a group of dress coats eddying wildly in the center of the room. Matt Nevin, the print of five fingers in red upon his face, was calling Nicholls names across the intervening bulks of Col. Pendering and Lawrence Jaffry, and Nicholls was exhorting his erstwhile chum to come out on the sidewalk, and be a gentleman if he could!

Mrs. Jaffry touched Sally Pennon on the arm. "No use our staying," she whispered, "it is a messy scene for women," and Sally followed her, winking back tears of impotent rage.

Her set maintained that Sally Pennon's greatest gift was her beauty.

Bessy Jaffry said it was her common sense. Because of that beauty, and her friendship with Mrs. Jaffry, she had penetrated from the skin to the core of that product known as "smart society." Because of that common sense, and a boyish love of "squareness," she had retained a certain generous and candid outlook—not without discernment—on her world and its people, and a reasonable consideration for the foibles of man.

She had no theories, but her principles were as real as her complexion, and she justified her flirtations as surely as she finished them. In effect, her appearance was exotic, her ideas Anglo-Saxon, and her clothes French.

Her temper was slow to anger, but the captious revenge of Nevin had stirred it, his subsequent language had fanned it, and, by the time she threw herself into the carriage where her younger brother was waiting her, it was blazing high. The allusion of the luckless youngster to the affair as a "lark" instantly involved him in the flame.

If he thought it a lark for two grown men to act like "hoodlums," she did not. If she had been a fool, it in no way excused Matt and Chris from behaving like two babies. But all men were alike—she hated them! and everything was horrid, as horrid as could be! She wished he would be quiet! When they stopped halfway up a bleak, wind-swept street of that part of San Francisco known as the "western addition," she flew out of the carriage, and was halfway up the stairs, in a whirlwind of chiffon, before the astonished boy had reached the sidewalk.

But she shut the door of her room softly for fear of rousing her mother. Throwing off her long cloak, she sat down on the floor before the fire and poked the coals to a blaze. Her lips were compressed, and a vertical line appeared between her straight brows. Mingled with anger was a sense of bitter humiliation, as though she had taken active part in the fiasco. She despised jealousy and pettiness, and, in spite of their tempers and temperaments, she had liked those two young men. She

had singled them out that season for favor above the common herd. She had danced, ridden and played golf with both, as impartially as, ten years before, she had swooped down the steep pavements on their coasting wagons—and done their "long division" for them in school. And in return they had made themselves odious, and dragged her into the ridicule. Sally was retentive of friends. It took much to estrange her, but this, she told herself, was enough. She would like to tell them both what she thought of them, and then never see them again!

The sharp ringing of the doorbell started her to her feet. "Who on earth—what time of night?" She looked at her watch. Quarter of twelve. She ran downstairs. Three cloaked and hooded figures were etched on a background of carriage lamps. A chorus of voices greeted her.

"Hello——"

"Hello, Sally!"

"Sally, it's awfully late, and papa's asleep in the carriage, but may we come in?"

The soft voice and smiling eyes of Chispa Diblee were a passport for the others.

"Saw your light, and thought we'd stop in a minute," cried the tall brunette.

"That's not it," broke in the plump one. "You went off in such a hurry, we had to come after you, and bring you the news."

"Mother's asleep," whispered Sally. "Come upstairs."

They trooped after her with lowered voices and smothered giggles.

Chispa Diblee managed to whisper, "I couldn't shake the girls, Sally. They would come!"

Miss Pennon squeezed her hand.

"I don't care," she said.

"Well, Sally," cried Lou Walker, the brunette, spreading her hands to the blaze, "you certainly have done it this time!"

"Isn't it great!" clamored the shrill treble of the plump one. "It is so romantic! I'd be awfully excited if I were you!"

"How you talk," replied the carefully amiable Sally.

"She doesn't know, she doesn't know!" sang the plump one. "Really, Sally, don't you?"

"I don't know what you are talking about, and I don't believe you do, either."

"Something happened after you left, Sally," said Chispa, soberly. "Matt Nevin challenged Christopher Nicholls."

"What?" Sally sat bolt upright—ineluctable.

"They're going to fight a duel," gurgled the plump one, "just think! About you, Sally, like what's his name—Hackett! I think it's grand! If one of them is hurt you'll have to nurse him."

"Oh, do shut up!" The thoroughly exasperated Miss Pennon appealed to Chispa Diblee.

"Yes, it is perfectly true, about the duel," she admitted, and Lou Walker added, with a side glance at Sally: "If you don't believe it, ask Lieut. Sanborn. He's going to be Nicholls' second."

The color flared in Sally's cheeks.

"No, no," Chispa hastened to say, "that's a mistake. They asked him, but he refused."

"But Barry More is," declared the plump one. "I heard him tell Mr. Jaffry they are going to fight on the Presidio golf links, at the fourth hole, at five to-morrow morning, with revolvers!" Her round blue eyes fairly bulged with excitement.

Sally faced her.

"Do you mean to tell me that they are going to be—such—such idiots as to fight a duel?"

A chorus of assent answered her.

"Well," she remarked, rising, "they are kids, and I'm going to bed!"

"It's no use trying to get a rise out of old Sally," remarked Lou Walker, as she climbed into the carriage. "She's deep as the deep sea."

"She was mad enough, though," commented the plump one.

Chispa Diblee was silent, remembering her friend's eyes as she said good-night. "I hope Sally won't do anything crazy," she thought.

Left alone, Miss Pennon ceased to brush her hair, and looked at her watch. Twelve-thirty, and the duel came off at five. If Larry Jaffry knew about that duel, Bess did. She put up her hair again, and took up her evening wrap.

It was a good ten blocks to Bessy's, and the carriage had gone, but she reflected that the California Street cars going down would be about empty at this hour, and beside, it was the only way. That was a mighty argument with Sally. Any means to a good end, and she felt quite sure of the end she had in view.

The Jaffry household slept like people drugged. She rang the bell so long and so loud that a sleek man-about town, going home after a dinner, inquired if she were lost. She remembered having been introduced to him at some function, and, grateful that he had not recognized her, "looked through him" till he raised his hat, and, murmuring, passed on. Then the door was opened by a disheveled maid.

"Mrs. Jaffry has gone to bed, Miss Sally," she said.

"Very well," said Sally, "I'll go right up."

The room was warm, and dark, and faintly suggestive of wilted violets. She tripped over a chair, and put her hand into a mass of lace.

"Who's that?" said the sleepy voice of Bessy.

"Sally Pennon," answered the unseen.

"Mercy, you rattlebrain, what are you doing here at this hour?"

"I have to see you, Bessy, and I'm not a bit rattle-brained," replied the visitor. She turned on the light and saw Mrs. Jaffry, risen on her elbow, yawning and blinking in the sudden glare.

"Did you forget your latchkey?" she inquired.

"No. I've been home, and come out again. Some of the girls stopped on the way home after the thing broke up. That is, Chispa came to tell me, and the others tagged to see how I would take it. I couldn't show them that I cared—but, oh Bess, how much of it is

true? Bess, do wake up and stop yawning, and tell me!"

"My dear child, I can't wake up under five minutes. Thus far I have had one. What's true, of whom?"

"Chris and Matt Nevin," said Sally, establishing herself on the foot of the bed. "Are they really going to fight?"

Bessy sat up.

"True enough, Sally. Southern blood is quick on the trigger."

"Couldn't Barry More stop it?"

"What use? Barry believes in letting nature take its course. Beside, he's never been a second before. It will amuse him."

"Don't pretend to be heartless, Bess!"

"But two men who slap and call names in public?"

"Oh, I know they behaved like a couple of street boys! That was bad enough—but a duel! It sounds well to write about, somewhere else, but here—now! at the fourth hole of the Presidio links! Bess, it's too ridiculous! Beside, they may kill each other!"

"Oh, I don't believe Mattie Nevin could hit a barn door."

"Maybe not, but Chris can, and I won't have Matt shot, if he has been a little cad!"

"But the talk, Sally! You must not be mixed up in that any more than you have to be."

"I know there'll be talk—horrid talk; and the papers will make fun out of it. That can't be escaped. I wouldn't care about that if it weren't for mother, and—and—"

"But, dear, he wouldn't think that!"

"Oh, you never can tell what a man will think," replied Sally, dabbing her nose with her handkerchief, "especially the army! But," with a return of energy, "I'm responsible for it, in a way, and I must stop them."

"But, child, the thing is pulled off at five this morning!"

"I know. That is why I came right over. We must see them first."

"We?"

"M'm," nodded Sally. "You are going to help me."

"I am! I think I see myself, ringing the bell of a bachelor apartment at four

in the morning, and being caught by the garrulous milkman!"

"No, stupid, we'll go to the golf links."

"What are we to do when we get there? Throw yourselves between them?"

"No, we will get there first, and meet them when they come, and I will talk to them."

Mrs. Jaffry began to laugh.

"Sally, Sally," she said, "talk two conceited men out of a hard-earned fight! How like you! Throw moral cold water on a back yard fuss! You can do it if anyone can!"

"Well, you'll come, won't you? You are such a brick!"

"Oh, yes, yes, I suppose I will, though the thought of pulling my bones out of my warm bed at such an hour makes me shudder. I suppose we would better take Larry, just to make everything entirely correct."

Sally looked thoughtful.

"Yes," she assented, "that would be good, but what will he say?"

"He will be too sleepy to say anything," replied Mrs. Jaffry. "Hand me my dressing jacket, and take a pillow. We may as well be comfortable while we talk this over. I would like to know your plan of attack."

At the hour when milk carts are rattling on their rounds, and street lamps burn pale and sickly, in the growing light, a party of two were drinking coffee in Mrs. Jaffry's boudoir. They were an oddly assorted pair. The small hostess' smart walking dress, and trim, flat hat consorted queerly with the tall guest's chiffon evening gown and lace-swathed shoulders. In fact, in her excitement, Sally had given no thought to her clothes, and it was only with the advent of breakfast that she woke to the incongruity of her attire. Getting into one of Bessy's frocks was pure impossibility, and Mrs. Jeffry's blithe suggestion that she don the dress of the evening before, Sally stamped upon.

"You and Larry looking respectable are our only chance of not being arrested," she declared.

"Mercy, I must wake him up and tell

him," cried Bessy, and disappeared through the dressing room with the cheery remark that she might as well file a counter suit for divorce immediately. But Lawrence Jaffry had not known his wife for ten years without learning to expect the unexpected.

At exactly quarter of five, an astonished lamplighter watched a strange procession come out of the house on the corner, and one after another, enter the carriage that waited. First an alert lady in a brown walking suit, then a tall young person, enveloped in a voluminous velvet garment that did not hide a fluff of green chiffon, and two green satin shoes, as she sprang into the four-wheeler. The rear was brought up by an imperfectly groomed man, who conveyed the impression of a sleep walker. Then the door of the cab snapped shut, and a high, feminine voice flung out the order, "Presidio golf club, and drive fast!"

On the morning of the encounter that promised to go down to posterity as the most remarkable in the annals of the "frothy little town," the alarm that went off in the room of the challenger, awoke also the challenged in his studio above. For the past year the combatants had occupied a house together, where former quarrels, arising from the combination of two artistic temperaments, had been quietly settled with chairs and bric-a-brac. There seemed no reason why both should not spend a possible "last night on earth," among their own, somewhat damaged, household gods; and to ward off a premature encounter, Barry More stayed with them. An unnecessary precaution. His services were more in demand in the matter of waking the principals, and reminding them what was in store for them. The gray hour of dawn pales the romantic hue of the duel you have to fight with your boyhood's friend because you were so unfortunate as to insult him in public. But it was less a feeling of love for Christopher, than of disgust for himself, and despair of Sally that made Matt Nevin think the blue waters of San Francisco Bay more inviting than the fourth hole of the golf links.

The reflections of these two bitter friends, breakfasting with the thickness of the wall between them, were surprisingly similar.

The first breath of sharp air, as Matt closed the gate, the terribly cold, ordinary every-dayness of the early morning percolating his sense of the dramatic, undermined his ardor.

"Everything looks so damned ridiculous by daylight," he muttered. "Wouldn't wonder if the milkman dunmed me at the corner." He hesitated—he half turned. He saw Nicholls follow Barry out of the door, and stand for a moment, looking off over the dull, gray city, with a face as impassive, as alert as a soldier on duty. Nevin stiffened in every limb, and marched on, cultivating wrath to the exclusion of all other feeling. Had he but known it, Nicholls, descending the steps like an officer on parade, adjusting his gloves like a dandy, was feeling the more the fool that he lacked the saving grace of humor. It never occurred to Chris Nicholls to turn back. There was no use reflecting that Sally would never speak to him again, he thought, as his cab rattled madly down Vallejo Street, half a block behind Matt's. The only thing for him to do afterward—so he told himself, and incidentally his second, Barry More, was to get out of town till the worst of the "ragging" was over. Barry coughed and said, "Of course; that is, if you are able to be moved."

Nicholls snarled at him, and Barry put his head out of the window to see their whereabouts.

Daylight, still wan in spite of the rosy East, was upon them as they passed the upper Presidio gate, and began to descend the steep drive that cuts through the reservation. It was one of those intensely still, clear mornings, with a mass of low fog rolling like a tidal wave through the Golden Gate. In an hour more it would wrap the city in a wet blanket, but now it broke, fleecy as wool, against the base of Point Bonita. The sky was opalescent. In front, the hills rolled up to the horizon, their long slopes blue with iris. A scent of new grass came keenly to his nostrils. Above

a clump of dark trees a flagstaff showed like a white streak. The two cabs now formed a procession with an interval of perhaps two feet between the back of the first cab and the nose of the second horse, putting Christopher pleasantly in mind of a funeral.

They drew up almost simultaneously opposite a grove of eucalyptus trees, and the three men crashed through the dead branches and dry leaves to the fourth hole of the golf links.

Here Barry and the fidgety straw colored youth, who was Nevin's second, appointed the distance on the putting green, and looked over the weapons.

The combatants regarded each other with renewed animosity. The sudden transition from the hackneyed streets, and the commonplace of every day, to the wide green sweep of hills, the blue arm of the bay, the trees moving against the warm, faint sky, seen in the unfamiliar light of dawn, reawakened Nevin's sense of the dramatic, and with it, a memory of his wrongs. But Nicholls, who assumed the artistic temperament as a garment, when occasion required, now stood forth in all the nudity of his realism. He knew that he was chilly, that he was thirsty as a sponge, that he was pre-eminently a fool. He was standing on a spot where he cursed so often and so futilely, with every intention of using a man he really liked for a target; and the thing that spoiled the joke was that he might shoot straight. It was not the past insult, but the present situation, that filled him with a rage that only blood could wipe out.

"Gentlemen," began Barry More.

In the cool, not to say penetrating, wind, the duelists reluctantly removed their coats. "Gen---" Barry began again. There the word hung suspended. There was a scurry in the eucalyptus leaves.

"Oh, we're late!" said a high, sweet voice with a falling inflection.

It acted on the duello like a galvanic battery. Barry, who faced the eucalyptus grove, gradually paralyzed. The other three wheeled. What they saw was Sally Pennon.

She stood, very tall against a background of sea and sky. The wind blew her hair around her face, billowed out the folds of her cloak, and rippled her green chiffon on the grass. The fluffy red hair and smartly set hat of Bessy Jaffry appeared in the middle distance.

"Oh, I'm so sorry," cried Sally, coming forward with outstretched hands. "I meant to be on time!"

The perfect aplomb of voice and manner conveyed the impression that she was a necessary adjunct to the duel. It cost an effort to remember her appearance was extraordinary and preposterous in the extreme. Barry was the first to recover.

"Well, Bess, in at the death?" he inquired, shaking hands with Mrs. Jaffry.

"Sh—h—" she whispered, pulling him aside, "I'm only Sally's second. It's her fight. Listen!"

"Really this is a very unexpected plea——" Matt Nevin had begun. Then his eye took cognizance of Sally's costume, and he choked.

"I know it," she replied, looking him up and down with a smile, "you didn't give me time to tell you I was coming."

"Oh, really," stammered Matt, "just a little—er—game of—er—golf before breakfast." He paused, aghast at the absurdity of his explanation.

"Oh, the devil!" Christopher flushed and wrathful, stepped to the fore. "Sally, you know why we are here?"

She nodded. "Perfectly."

"Then why are *you* here? It's not like you to meddle! It's d—ulp sentimental, and it's d—er awkward, too!"

"I am here," replied Miss Pennon, sedately, "because I am the only one of us three who is not 'd—ulp sentimental.'" She seated herself on a convenient stump. The duelists looked blank.

"But you can't stay here," Nicholls protested. "Call my cab, Barry! Mrs. Jaffry, will you help me?"

Bessy smiled a disinterested smile and corrected a wandering lock of hair.

"No," said the young lady on the stump, "we can't any of us stay here much longer."

Matt glanced nervously behind him at the barracks that were already exhibiting faint signs of life.

"This is an affair of honor between gentlemen," he began stiffly. "And I won't have your name mixed up in such a dirty business," ended the savage Christopher.

"I agree with Chris," replied the tranquil Sally, "and I am not mixing up in this affair for fun. But in a way I feel responsible. I did a silly thing last night, Matt did something more than silly—then Chris slapped, and both called names. I think it's ridiculous—much more ridiculous than dirty! It is just the way you used to act ten years ago. First, Chris got his dignity hurt—then Matt got on his high horse. It was always silly! It's sillier now, because you are men!"

"Well," demanded Christopher, darkly, "if that's your opinion, why take so much trouble on our account?"

"Chris Nicholls," she answered, pinning him with the direct candor of her dark blue eyes, "you know perfectly well, and Matt knows, too, how much I like both of you! I've known you since all three of us wore overalls, and from the time you nearly killed my kitten, feeding him vermouth, till last night, I never knew either of you to play a mean trick. I'd be a pretty poor friend, wouldn't I, if I should give up such old chums without lifting a finger to fix it, just because you were cads this once!"

They were silent before her tribunal. It was in the mind of each to hope that she was prompted less by friendship, and more by another feeling.

"And if you did fight this stupid duel," she continued, "I could never speak to either of you again. So you see I had to come." The dark blue eyes appealed mutely to the assembled company.

In the increasing light behind the trees the mystery of early morning was departing from familiar objects, and last night's emotion appeared stale and flat.

"The devil of it is, Sally," thus

Nicholls, standing very straight, "we've dragged you into the muss!"

"Pshaw—that doesn't matter half so much as you two boys making two fools of yourselves!"

"Yes, it does," they insisted in concert, "it's the only thing that does matter!"

"Then why go on with this? Nobody will be a bit the wiser unless you insist on shooting each other."

"Impossible, Sally," replied the dogged Nicholls. "I don't enjoy the prospect, and I know Matt would give his eyes to be out of it, but we've started the damned thing, and we've got to see it through."

"Oh, nonsense!" Sally rose up and stamped her foot. "Aren't you sufficiently ridiculous already? Do you think Bess and I sat up all night discussing this for fun? Just look at me!" She flung open her cloak, and displayed her chiffon décolleté. "I was too excited last night to remember to change my dress, and now, at six in the morning, I feel like an escaped lunatic. Well, you both look just as funny as I!" She began to laugh.

"Well, my friends," began Barry More, his amused eyes on the erstwhile enemies, "the military patrol will be around shortly, looking for trouble, and find us. Suppose we close this incident as Miss Penmon so happily suggests."

"Are you making fun?" demanded Sally. "This is all sober earnest to three of us, isn't it, Matt?"

"Sally," he assured her earnestly, "for a belle, you are the best fellow on earth." Her hand was in his. She reached and took the hand of the frowning Nicholls, and slowly drew them together.

The hands clasped gingerly.

"There's Larry," remarked Mrs. Jaffry. "Who in the world has he got with him?" The square figure and flushed face of Mr. Jaffry were emerging from the grove, with a tall form in an officer's cape in his wake. Sally saw it with a sinking heart.

"Hello," quoth Jaffry, genially. "All over—no one hurt?"

"Jaffry!"

"Bess and I are chaperoning *this affair*," Jaffry explained, with a wave of his hand toward Sally. "I'm surprised you did not shoot Sally. I told her she might expect it, interrupting an affair of honor."

"Honor!" scoffed Mrs. Jaffry. Sally's eyes were on the tall officer. "Good-morning, Lieut. Sanborn," she said, in a dubious voice.

Immediately the lieutenant was the center of attention. Mr. Jaffry felt the eyes of his wife upon him, and knew that an explanation was demanded of him.

"Er—I met Sanborn," he began, "as I was—er—driving about the reservation, and—er—thinking the services of a—a surgeon might be necessary, and —er—not being able to find one—I—er —a—brought Sanborn."

The explanation seemed inadequate. The faces of four men expressed the unspoken query, "what the devil has *this* man got to do with *this* affair?"

The dismayed Jaffry made a cowardly appeal to Sally.

"Er—I thought perhaps you might like—that is, you would want—"

Sally's face was flame, but her eyes sparkled mischief.

"Yes, Mr. Jaffry," she said, stepping to the officer's side, "I *do* like! I am very glad you did! Lieut. Sanborn, I want you to tell these people what I told you last week."

"This lady," he said, "has done me the great honor to promise to belong to me. Naturally," he raised his eyes to the company, "I am delighted to find her with colors flying in full possession of the field!"

"I was going to announce it next week," said Sally, addressing herself to the blank faces of the one time duelists, "but we are such old friends, I wanted you to know first."

"And now," supplemented the lieutenant, "get these ladies into a carriage! Here comes the patrol!"

## A MEETING

I HEAR a sound like piping and like sails  
In silken talk with wind, and like the speech  
Of some one quiet in the blue of dawn,  
Along the silent beach.

I see a light as when the last sad star  
Flowers faintly in the ashen morning sky,  
And long white wings appear and disappear  
And dip and circle by.

I think of violet billows veiled with foam;  
I think of all the red of east and west;  
I hear the secret stir of nameless dead  
Conferring in my breast.

You make me long for echoes and for flowers  
And for strange words on lips I do not know;  
You make me dream of all I learned to dream  
How long,—how long ago.

ZONA GALE.

## EDGERTON'S LOST OPPORTUNITY

By Hartley Davis

THERE were many things awry in Edgerton.

One was his sense of humor which tossed him into no end of scrapes and deserted him at critical moments.

Another was a habit of introspection, which is really a twisted vanity which, like most vain things, leads one into trouble. And there was the execrable habit, which Edgerton contracted in his youth, of making epigrams, but he had the good sense to be ashamed of it and to fight against it.

He was one of the most cheerful men who ever knew the black emptiness of absolute depression, and he was so afraid of taking himself seriously that it became the serious business of his life to avoid it, that is, until he met her whom he called the Smiling Enigma. There is no doubt that she exhaled mystery. The rustle of her skirts was like a dark whispering; the quizzical, half-cynical look in her brown eyes—and every one knows that brown eyes should either flash, or be limpid and trusting—the half-defiant pose of her head; the individuality in her simplest gowns; these things and others which Edgerton could not describe made the Enigma utterly unlike the women with whom he was accustomed to associate.

Edgerton had known her for a long time—three months at least—a fortnight of which was passed in the close association of a house party. It was after a supplementary week-end at the Van Valkenburgh country place that he held communion with himself and reached a conclusion.

"This is the fooliest thing in the world, and therefore the wisest," said Edgerton, soberly, to Mona Lisa, who smiled mockingly at him from her place

on the wall. He knew that he loved the Smiling Enigma with an affection that permeated his whole being, and his determination was summed up in one of his cheap epigrams. But he could not dismiss a highly uncomfortable presentiment that he was preparing for a tragedy. But then, in secret, Edgerton always regarded matrimony as a tragedy, due largely to the way he looked at things, and to his own habits of life. But what especially oppressed him was the air of mystery that enveloped her, and mystery is a most fearsome thing. The mere fact that she visited the Van Valkenburghs should have more than offset this, for no one in his sober senses would dream of questioning the stamp of the Van Valkenburghs than he would that of the United States mint. But there was no doubt that the Enigma aroused speculation. Perhaps it would have been explained in the beginning that she was a widow.

Having reached a decision, Edgerton could see no reason for delay. He knew that half a dozen men were in love with her, or thought they were, and he realized that he might escape matrimony despite his most earnest efforts in that direction.

Edgerton decided to speak to the Enigma at the Bennington's ball, and it was at that function that Dolly Moore first learned of his devotion to the widow. In his considerations Edgerton had given no thought to Miss Moore, to whom he had given a deal of his attention at one time or another. This was not remarkable, inasmuch as he regarded Miss Moore as a jolly, amusing and interesting youngster. Her ideas were different.

Despite her youth, her naturalness and

the spontaneous gaiety of a child, Dolly Moore had a clear perception of what she wanted in this world, coupled with concentration of purpose. Edgerton was included in the things that Miss Moore wanted. She was anxious to escape from the paternal roof, to have an establishment of her own, and enjoy the freedom of a married woman with a secure position. She was in love with matrimony in the abstract, and Edgerton appealed to her in the concrete. He was good-natured, good-looking, had charming manners and a comfortable income—what more could a reasonable girl ask in a husband? When Miss Moore saw Edgerton dance with the widow three numbers in succession, her surprise was followed by apprehension and anger. She scented danger, and cleared for action. And there was reason.

"I have something to say to you," Edgerton remarked to the Enigma, just as if he had not been talking to her the greater part of the evening.

She gathered herself with that air of innocence a woman assumes when she prepares to repel an attack she has invited.

"I am stupid in making love," he declared. "Perhaps it is from lack of experience." The Enigma smiled cynically. Edgerton was perfectly truthful in what he said. He knew that she would not believe him, and that it was wisest to be honest.

"Do you think you have to make love to me?" she inquired, with polite weariness.

"Yes, I know I have to make love to you—because I cannot help it." He smiled slightly, but he spoke with perfect sincerity, and he looked into her eyes where the quizzical expression gave way to a puzzled one.

"I have thought about it for a long time," he pursued, "and it is a familiar thing to me, but I know it must be strange to you. We have kept far afield from love-making, but it seems only fair to yourself and myself that you should know."

"It is very ridiculous," she observed. "Do you usually—"

"Always," returned Edgerton, "do you?"

She laughed, and turned her clear brown eyes toward him. There was more of friendliness in them than she had ever shown before.

"But you know nothing of me," she protested. "It's absurd!"

"Most absurd, but it's true."

"Do I understand that you do me the honor to——?"

"You do," said Edgerton, with emphasis.

"But you don't know anything about me," she persisted.

"If there is anything I should know, anything I have a right to know, you will tell me," he said, having in mind the sense of mystery that oppressed him, while the Enigma raised her eyebrows. "Besides, one never knows about anyone. We change so radically in the crucible of experience. People who have known each other all their lives usually make the biggest blunders because they are determined to cling to impressions formed in their youth which were probably wrong in the beginning. And when these illusions are destroyed things are likely to go smash. There is nothing that brings out the verities like the eternal duet. Now it is my good fortune to be in love with you without any preconceived notions whatever, and——"

"The old Strauss waltzes are the best, after all," said the Enigma, dreamily, as if she had heard nothing but the music.

"You do it very badly," he commented, with judicial disappointment. "Really, I thought you cleverer than that."

"It isn't worth while to be clever about it."

"It is worth while to be honest," returned Edgerton.

"Why should you spoil things in this way?" she demanded. "I like you, I value your friendship, I wanted——"

"Do you always?" interposed Edgerton, pronouncing each word with marked distinctness.

"No," she said, sharply, "I don't."

Edgerton smiled, a sunny, light-

hearted smile. He saw her eyelids flutter and fall, and a faint flush steal into her cheeks.

"Thank you," he said, softly, and the Enigma looked almost frightened. When a youth boldly claimed a dance that was not his, she permitted him to carry her off without protest.

Dolly Moore had been waiting for an opportunity, and she approached the Enigma as she would her dearest friend.

"Oh! Mrs. Warrington," she cried. The Enigma's name was Mrs. Lionel Warrington. When Edgerton first heard it he said it was too good to be true. Of course that was before he met her. "I am so glad that you and Mr. Edgerton are such good friends," Miss Moore went on. "I do like people to like him; he's such a dear."

Miss Moore spoke so unaffectedly, so whole-heartedly, with such apparent honesty and sincerity that not a suspicion entered the mind of Mrs. Warrington. There are times when young and beautiful widows are credulous.

"He is charming," she replied, languidly. "I fancy that most people like him."

"Indeed they do, and I am not a bit jealous," Miss Moore continued, confidentially. "I have known him all my life, and he is just as good as he is charming. I said, when I was six, that I was going to marry him, and I have never changed my mind."

"Oh, I didn't know—"

"It is one of those tacitly understood things," explained Miss Moore, hastily. "You know he is ever so much older than I, and—"

A partner claimed Dolly, and as she floated off Mrs. Warrington called after her:

"You are looking lovely to-night, dear."

She smiled cynically to herself, and if Edgerton had seen the look she cast after him it would have troubled him. But he went on into the room where the "sideboarders" were holding their usual session. They received Edgerton with respect for he was not one of them. Helmsom was talking and Ed-

gerton frowned. Helmsom passed the greater part of his time at summer and winter resorts where the links were good. He had original ideas on golf, and his other notions were equally heterodox and abominable. His specialty, on and off the links, was the mistakes and misfortunes of others.

"She comes of a very good family," Edgerton heard him say, "and it was a decent thing for the man to marry her, but—"

Edgerton hated talk of that kind. It would have delighted him to have knocked Helmsom down with his fist, but of course that was not to be considered, so he did the next best thing.

"Helmsom, haven't you a scandal in your own family you can regale us with?" he asked. "You would be more likely to know the truth about it."

It was a nasty thing to say, and there was a hush. Helmsom turned livid.

"Perhaps you would prefer to tell it to me privately," Edgerton went on, smoothly and evenly. "I am going now, and you may come along if you like."

Helmsom's teeth rattled with rage; he opened his mouth, but no word came forth. He turned on his heel and left the room.

The next day Edgerton felt sorry for what he said, although Helmsom deserved not the slightest consideration. He said as much to John Wardner.

"It was a frightful slap," observed Wardner, "and it was pretty rough on all of us. Still, there was justice in it. But when did you become Mrs. Warrington's champion?"

Edgerton was grateful for the newspaper that screened his face for the moment.

"I did not know about whom Helmsom was speaking," he said. Which was true, but Edgerton was afraid that he had guessed correctly. That is what made him feel guilty.

"There has been gossip," Wardner pursued, as if he felt that he was called upon to defend himself for listening to Helmsom without a protest. "You know there is something mysterious about her."

"I never discovered it," said Edger-

ton, casually and mendaciously. He felt his heart sink within him.

It is not good for a man to learn that the name of the woman he loves and whom he wishes to marry is a plaything of gossip. Indefinite figments, born of fear and suspicion that are a part of every human being, formed themselves into mocking, tormenting demons to tear and sear his soul.

For the life of him, and despite the contempt that it aroused against himself, Edgerton could not resist the temptation to ask Wardner to tell him all that Helmsen had said. It was one of those tales of deadly innuendo, with many probabilities resting upon few facts.

Edgerton went forth from the club feeling that the bottom had dropped out of things. Almost the first person he saw was Mrs. Warrington. The unexpectedness of the meeting, his sense of his own personal guilt in doubting her, confused him for a moment. She gave him a glance of contemptuous defiance, a cool suggestion of a nod, and entered the brougham. He thought there was something distinctly vicious in the snapping of the door. He jumped to the conclusion that Helmsen's story had reached her ears, and that she believed that he had been affected by it.

He went to his rooms to thresh out the matter, and for a while he floundered in a gray labyrinth of misery.

Gradually he found himself. He was supremely conscious that he loved her, but his good name was dear to Edgerton. He had an honest respect for conventions which are nothing more than the crystallized experience of the ages. He had a deep satisfaction in the position he occupied. He realized the persecution that society inflicts upon those who live under the shadow of a scandal, and the suffering that it would cause him if people looked askance at his wife. He knew that only great and noble natures could rise above such a situation, that only a great affection could ignore it. Calmly and judicially he reviewed the whole matter, making no attempt to gloss over the disagreeable possibilities, and in the end, as in the be-

ginning he knew he would say, he summed up his determination:

"I love her; that is the important thing. I know that she is worthy of any man's love, and I would be a poor, pitiful thing were I not glad of the privilege to stand by her side when evil threatens her, give her the protection of my name, the comfort of my affection, should she want it. I should rejoice in the opportunity to fight for her with all my strength. That is what I ought to do, that is what I want to do, and it shall be so if she will."

There came to him an elation, a glow that filled his whole being—heroes are always enticing to most men. It was not the exaltation of self-sacrifice so much as a realization that his love for her was so great that he was willing to make any sacrifice for her. It did occur to Edgerton to give Mrs. Warrington the benefit of the doubt. That is the law, and Edgerton knew the law. He gave her the benefit of the doubt just as does an attorney who is prosecuting a prisoner.

He sought her the next day, and in the fear that she might refuse to see him, he had written a direct, impressive note that brought her to the drawing-room. She was more enigmatical than ever, and so cold and distant that Edgerton was chilled. He was acutely conscious of the stiffness and formality of his words:

"Mrs. Warrington, the last time I talked with you I tried to make you understand that I purposed asking you to become my wife. I did not intend pressing you for an answer. I have waited so many years before asking any woman to marry me that I could delay it a little longer. But since then certain things have occurred."

His courage failed him for an instant. Mrs. Warrington was thinking of Dolly Moore, and the smile on her lips did not reassure him. She could not forbear asking:

"What things?"

"You will pardon me for referring to it. I mean the gossip that disgraceful scandal-mongers have dared to circulate about you."

"About me?" Her face whitened.  
"What have they said?"

"It is only fair that you should know," he said, slowly, "although it cuts me to the quick to repeat it." He softened the story as much as he could, and the way in which she received it made him rejoice in the decision he had made. There are times when a brave woman appeals to a man more than a good one. She tried to interrupt him.

"It is not fair that you should say one word until I have finished," there was authority and a ring in his voice. "I want you to marry me, not because of any quixotic notion of chivalry, but because I love you better than anything in the world, and because I want you more than I want anything."

Roses bloomed on her cheeks; she looked at him with wide, wondering eyes.

"But you have not asked me about—about these stories."

"I have asked you to marry me—to-day if you will or whenever you may choose."

"Even if the stories be true?"

"Even if they be true."

"You are willing to face the contempt of your friends, their pity, their sneers—everything?"

"Everything with you and for you."

"And just because—"

"Just because I love you, and for no other reason in the wide world."

The Enigma gave a little, uncertain, hysterical cry and sank into his arms.

"How about Dolly Moore?" she asked, suddenly. The Enigma was a very womanly woman at heart.

"What about her?"

"She told me you were engaged to her, not formally, of course, but that there was a tacit understanding."

"Dolly Moore ought to be spanked," said Edgerton, with emphasis. "It isn't true. There was never any justification for her saying that."

"You have not asked me about—about those stories."

"You shall tell me about them in your own good time, or not at all if you prefer."

She laughed happily, and he looked at her in amazement. She insisted upon telling him the true tale, a story of a sacrifice made by a girl for her father's sake, of devotion and generosity to a husband she could not love, a brute of a husband.

"One doesn't like to talk about those things," she concluded. "One's pride should keep the family skeleton in its closet. That is what made me appear so reserved, and—and mysterious."

She stopped suddenly, and looked at him with the familiar cold, enigmatical gaze.

"You—believed—those—stories?"

"Well, I—I didn't, I didn't know," said Edgerton, lamely. He was a truthful man, and, besides, it had been so obvious.

There was resentment in her eyes, but he met them fearlessly. Her face softened as she continued:

"But even when you believed them you were willing to take me without a question, without a reservation? You loved me enough for that? You were willing to be a martyr, to fight the whole world for me?" She laughed softly. "You have lost the great opportunity of your life."

Edgerton couldn't see the humor in it, but he forgot all about it when a white hand stole about his neck and a soft cheek was pressed against his.

## SPRING DRAMATIC SUCCESSES

By Alan Dale

DO you recall the morbid, brain-racking scruples of the late, once-popular novel-hero, Mr. Robert Elsmere, who, suddenly possessed with the idea that he no longer believed in what he preached, felt it his psychological duty to oust himself from those dubious topics? If you do, you may be able to sympathize with a mood that I owned lately. After having viewed seventeen or eighteen musical comedies, this season, with unbudging dislike, it began to dawn upon me that I must be wrong; that I must have lost the ability to judge impartially this strenuous form of entertainment; in a word, that I had no right to continue disliking it.

I felt a strong sense of heroism, as I made up my mind picturesquely to desert musical comedy, for the reasons above stated. It seemed to me that I was about to do a noble thing—self-sacrificial, honorable and quite praiseworthy. There was just a little pain in it, of course. I might even have compromised, and have mentally “balméd” myself by the certain conviction that nearly all the musical comedies I had so flamboyantly detested, had been failures. But no, I wouldn’t do that; I preferred to be noble to the bitter end.

That was my mental condition when upon a bright and pleasing afternoon, I went to the Broadway Theater to see Henry W. Savage’s production of “The Yankee Consul,” deliberately and unhesitatingly announced as a “comic opera.” The effect of that afternoon was most gratifying. When I left the Broadway Theater, I felt as a man must do, who confidently expecting death, is greeted with a promise of renewed life. My sensations were akin to those that must be

experienced by the poor wretch who, tottering on the brink of insanity, discovers that he is gorgeously sane, in spite of all.

No such sacrifice as I had contemplated was necessary. To my joy, I found myself able to grow enthusiastic over “The Yankee Consul”; positively to gloat over a comic opera; to expand chattily at its delightful points, and to prove to myself that I was just as ingenuous as ever. This was an exquisite surprise to me, and I banished the morbid, brain-racking scruples of the late, once-popular novel-hero, Mr. Robert Elsmere, peremptorily from my mind.

“The Yankee Consul” seemed to show that comic opera, presented by clever people, in an artistic fashion, was just as potent as ever; furthermore, that poor, old much-abused New York was ready and anxious to take to its bosom artists of intelligence and refinement, who, by legitimate and amiable methods, were able to make their points convincingly.

You hear a good deal nowadays about Henry W. Savage being such a “lucky” man. While I do believe in “luck” to a certain extent, I am nevertheless convinced that it takes a great many very estimable qualities to coax it forth; in other words, I don’t believe in “blind luck.” Savage’s luck consists in unabashed ability to know a good thing when he sees one; to rout out clever people (whom other managers have overlooked), and extract the very essence of their soul from them; and to offer American goods to an American public, without wasting time beating about the often profitless bushes of “the other side.”

This is what "Savage's luck" means. He knows how to do these things; other managers don't. He does not play the insensate game known as "follow the leader." He has the ability to lead, and if there be any following to be done—well, he leaves it to the imitative herd.

"The Yankee Consul" was dominated by two such admirable artists, that humor seemed to take on a new meaning, and laughter to become a pleasure, instead of skulking, as a humiliation. These two artists were Mr. Raymond Hitchcock, and Miss Eva Davenport, both of whom have, upon occasion, manifested their excellent qualities. Mr. Hitchcock was the "star" of "The Yankee Consul," with a perfect right to occupy that position. Here is a young man, who, with none of the blatant, flannel-y methods of the individual we call "low comedian," (with an accent on the "low"), is able to score persistently by work as legitimate, in its way, as that of a Mansfield or an Irving. He never resorts to "mugging," to the antics of the monkey, to the crudity of the buffoon, or to the horseplay of the "Tenderloin" favorite. He is funny, without a suspicion of vulgarity, and you laugh at him intellectually, realizing that such mirth is just as keen, and far more lasting, than that evoked by obstreperous means.

Hitchcock is a typical Yankee, with the deep-rooted sense of dry, irresistible humor belonging to his kind. He tickled us immensely when we saw him in "King Dodo," but he has never displayed his quality so luminously as in "The Yankee Consul." Such a comedian may be set down by some as a tribute to "Savage's luck." I prefer to assign him to Savage's unerring intuition—the intuition that was also responsible for the admirable Frank Moulan in "The Sultan of Sulu."

In "The Yankee Consul" Raymond Hitchcock sings three songs, that from the lips of the usual rowdy comic opera obstructionist, might fall flat as the proverbial pancake. As he sings them, or speaks them, or acts them, they are marvels of fine discretion and clean perception, and they indicate the difference be-

tween the horrors that are submitted to us as comic opera, and this good, and soothing entertainment.

Miss Eva Davenport is equally happy. There are a good many pounds of Miss Eva Davenport—she might be weighed, and not found wanting—but her "comedy" appearance is not responsible for her success. She is genuinely amusing, in a quiet, sedate way, that simply gets into your risible cuticle. In "The Yankee Consul" she is a Spanish duenna, and in spite of the fact that she perpetually compelled laughter—that she would have made the Sphinx titter—she nevertheless played with a dignity and artistic demeanor that were almost amazing.

New York seemed very nearly as pleased as I was, with "The Yankee Consul," for though I have alluded somewhat pathetically to what I imagined was a morbid mood, I can't help thinking—please tell it not in Gath—that the metropolis was just about as ready as I was to emulate the late popular Mr. Robert Elsmere. New York, of course, doesn't write things, but, like the old lady's parrot, it must do an awful lot of thinking. The success of the piece was assured from the very start. There was no doubt about it in the minds of its first audience.

And, if you promise not to mention it to a soul—promise? honor bright?—I'll confess that I went back to the Broadway Theater, a few days later, and saw "The Yankee Consul" again, just for fun, sitting there all by my lonelies, and chuckling gleefully, like a theater-struck youngster. How's that for a critic, who is sometimes called *blasé*, and who had almost come to the conclusion that the "musical show" would in future be deleted from his outfit?

It seems almost like retrogression to allude to "Glittering Gloria," which occurred before the joyous metamorphosis to which I have just alluded. Yet it was one of the happenings of the month, and must be tucked into history, even though poor old long-suffering history could most assuredly jog along very nicely without it.

"Glittering Gloria" came from Lon-

don, although it was made by an American, Mr. C. M. S. McClellan, whose pen-name is Hugh Morton, and who was responsible for the "libretto" of "The Belle of New York." Since the halcyon success of that musical comedy, abroad, Mr. Hugh Morton seems to have dallied there, presumably to drink long draughts of that bracing and encouraging atmosphere. If these draughts were responsible for "Glittering Gloria," I am afraid that they are scarcely worth advertising as health-giving tonics.

The piece, when I saw it in London, was destitute of "music." For New York—oh, irony of ironies!—it was "musically" caparisoned by a Mr. Bernard Rolt. If you can imagine a Palais Royal farce, with plenty of doors, and conjugal complications, and a dog, and a strenuous semblance of riot and din, with "musical" interpolations, you may get some faint idea of this dramatized Bedlam. It evoked wonder at the weird managerial judgment that imports this sort of thing. It sets a halo around what I have already discussed as "Savage's luck," and visualizes an amusing picture of that astute manager, sitting at home, and judging, while the others rush abroad, and even when they see a bad piece, lack the gumption to know it.

In spite of an admirable cast, that included such people as the little sugar prima-donna, Adele Ritchie—who always reminds me of the figures on wedding cakes—Cyril Scott, Ferdinand Gottschalk, Forrest Robinson and Percy F. Ames, poor "Gloria" seemed to be very much like the near-silk that our ninety-eight-cent umbrellas are made of, and the "glitter" was all on the handsome bills, with which the elevated railroad stations have been so picturesquely bestrewn. It was a forlorn hope. Anybody who had seen the piece in London—always providing that he was not a manager—would have realized that at once. Music was quite powerless to redeem it, and that let loose by Mr. Bernard Rolt was particularly ineffective. But the fact that music was added, as a sop to poor music-fagged New York, struck me as being emphatically droll.

And now, having precedence to mu-

sical comedy, in this review, the voice of conscience is temporarily stilled. I may go ahead in the certain conviction that I can no longer be accused of slighting that alleged popular form of entertainment. Kindly note that I have placed "The Yankee Consul" and "Glittering Gloria" ahead of the Shakespearian revivals and—and please think less harshly of my shortcomings.

These Shakespearian events were, strangely enough, both revivals of "Twelfth Night," but as one was Elizabethan, and the other Rooseveltian, they called for separate sets of idea. It never rains but it pours—and it was a trifle odd that "Twelfth Night," which is such a rarity in this vicinity nowadays, should have been lavished upon us in a double dose. Sometimes, I can't help believing in managerial telepathy. It is the only way in which one can account for the insistent harping upon one string. This cannot be due to coincidence.

The "Elizabethan" production of "Twelfth Night" occurred at the Knickerbocker Theater, thither propelled by the energetic Mr. Ben Greet (the "Ben" sounds unduly familiar, but it is Mr. Greet himself who sanctions its use) of London, aided and abetted by Mr. Charles Frohman. Mr. Greet's presentation of the morality play, "Everyman," had met with such success, that he felt emboldened to see what he could do for the immortal William.

However, the reasoning that prompts a belief in the charm of an exultant presentation of Shakespeare without scenic embellishments, seems to me singularly fallacious. Because Shakespeare, in his day, was unable to acquire sumptuous settings, is no good argument in favor of our dispensing therewith. The world progresses. It is a happy little way that the world has. Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden, do not set the fashion in the "nobby outfits" of to-day. The indications are that Mr. Shakespeare himself, being a person of an enlarged and artistic mind, would most assuredly have revelled in the wonderful stage of to-day, that caters persistently to roseate scenic illusion, and permits

various pictures to be variously interpreted.

Mr. Greet, moreover, is so timidly Elizabethan, that he awakens little admiration. He allows women to play the feminine roles; he uses the orchestra in a manner that would have made Avon's Bard marvel, and while professing a keen anxiety to produce "Twelfth Night" as it was written, he announces, in fearsome daintiness, that while his "educational design" is to do justice to the poet's text, he gives it in its entirety, only "so far as that is possible without offending modern taste." That seems decidedly eccentric to the impartial observer.

If modern taste be worth educating at all, by the good and philanthropic Mr. Greet, that education can scarcely be a mere matter of scenery. If students of the "Elizabethan period" are so ravaged by prudery and finnickity sentiment that they cannot possibly listen to Shakespeare, as he was "writ," without blushes, then the Elizabethan fabric totters, and has no leg upon which to support itself. In fact, Mr. Greet's announcement reads like that of the conventional "showman" rather than that of an erudite student.

To be sure, Shakespearian productions have, in many instances, been utterly marred by excess of scenery, that necessitated the constant dropping of curtains, and the noisy manipulations of scene-shifters. Much that we have often thought to be Shakespeare, was, in effect, nothing more than chowder, with a Shakespearian flavoring. Between the two extremes, there is, naturally, a middle course, and as, in most things, it is the "happy medium" that we need.

In the Elizabethan production of "Twelfth Night" the attention of the audience was distracted just as forcibly from the play, by the lack of proper scenic equipment, as it was diverted from a recent production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," by its asphyxiation of embellishment. Moreover, how can one put oneself in an Elizabethan mood nowadays? Imagine even thinking of the lordly, dominant, self-assertive, newspapered actors of to-day,

as the poor Elizabethan mummers of the seventeenth century!

A production of Shakespeare without scenery, recalls not only Elizabethan inconveniences, but certain oddities of presentation that were in vogue in England in the early nineteenth century. The status of the actor was then very low, and Shakespearian plays had a hard time of it. A certain historian tells an amusing story of one of these rough-and-tumble productions of "Antony and Cleopatra" in the north of England.

It was the custom for actors to thresh out their little grievances on the stage, before the audience, as a sort of unrehearsed interlude. In the case in question, the leading actor had been accused of ill-treating his leading lady, and the audience listened to this dialogue before "Antony and Cleopatra" began:

"Have I ever been guilty of any injustice of any kind to you, since you have been in the theater?" asked *Antony*.

"No, sir," replied *Cleopatra*.

"Have I ever behaved to you in an ungentlemanlike manner?" persisted *Antony*.

"No, sir."

"Have I ever kicked you?"

"Oh, no, sir."

At which point, the audience burst into applause: *Antony* and *Cleopatra* stepped into Shakespeare, so to speak, and the play proceeded. This was not Elizabethan, but it occurred at a period quite worthy of Mr. Greet's attention, for there could have been but little scenic embellishment. Had there been the illusion of the scenery that we know, such an episode would have been impossible.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. The revival of "Twelfth Night" without scenery, was a thing of deadly dullness, of ineffable lethargy. There is no play in the whole Shakespearian repertoires, that calls for scenery more yearningly than "Twelfth Night." Even in the most illusion-giving cases, it is a play that "reads" better than it acts. It needs a little "inducement"—a slight coating of sugar to what I shall dare to call the "pill." Even the admirable acting of Miss Edith Wynne Matthison, as

*Viola*, suffered from the Elizabethan setting. Beautiful as her work was in many respects, it would have seemed finer with "surroundings." Miss Matthison is a charming actress, but she was not the ideal *Viola*, as she lacked the lightness and sunshine that are usually associated with that rôle.

The other production of "Twelfth Night"—the Rooseveltian production—was made by Miss Viola Allen, at the same theater, with an extremely picturesque setting. It gave this actress a chance to oust herself from the stupefying melodramatic trammels of Mr. Hall Caine, whose plays "The Christian" and "The Eternal City," enslaved her for so long. Miss Allen is somewhat hard and metallic, but as *Viola* she gave an exceedingly creditable performance, and one that will help to reinstate her in New York favor.

Unfortunately, after a short week, this actress was obliged to withdraw, on account of a serious indisposition, and this seemed singularly unlucky, just as she was launched upon a venture that promised such good things. She is a young woman of intelligence and refinement, who dwelt happily in our midst, for a long time, as leading lady of the Empire Stock Company. Her production of "Twelfth Night" was reassuring, if not inspiring, and she may lay the flattering unction to her soul that in spite of her unfortunate illness—in spite also of Mr. Ben Greet—she marked herself upon the season.

Young Mr. Arnold Daly has loomed up this year with his most praiseworthy projections of Bernard Shaw's "plays pleasant." In a season almost devoid of artistic merit, young Daly has scored enormously, and this invariably right-minded public has applauded his gallant efforts to appeal to people whose brains are still in working order. His production of "Candida" is now an old story, though the play is still potent, and has attracted more attention, and aroused more discussion than any other single production of the year.

He recently added to "Candida" the delightfully brilliant little one-act comedy, known as "The Man of Destiny."

It was essayed at a benefit matinée, with exuberant results, and was then placed on the regular bill at the Vaudeville Theater for some time. It is a delicious bit of work—it is the fantastic Shaw at his best—and the strange thing is that managers, at their wits' end for novelty, overlooked this most palatable morsel, that they could have had for the asking. But—parodying the song—the poor men didn't know, you know!

New York managers have no very exalted idea of the intelligence of this community. Exactly how they estimate the extent of our cerebral endowment, I do not know. Their favorite comment upon any play, the significance of which is not instantly apparent to the weak-minded, is "Oh, it's above the heads of the public!" You hear this so frequently that you really begin to believe that the heads of this public must be at about the same level as the feet of any other. Possibly, the intrinsic value of the Bernard Shaw plays, as literature, and as thinking material, has kept them in book form, for so long.

In "The Man of Destiny," Mr. Daly plays *Napoleon* at the age of twenty-six, and the audience sees a most unusual picture of this illustrious, but much abused, character—this refuge for the destitute, in comic opera, melodrama and comedy. This *Napoleon* is witty, brainy, entertaining and unconventional. He is confronted by femininity, in the shape of a character entitled only "A Lady," and Mr. Shaw pictures the young man as far more interested—for this brief half hour—in petticoats than in history.

The "Lady" has, in the disguise of a man, robbed one of *Napoleon's* lieutenants of important papers. The "Petit Caporal" soon learns this fact. The little play is devoted to a lively skirmish between the two. *Napoleon* bullies, teases, cajoles. The "Lady" scratches, purrs and wheedles. The situation is so animated, that one is instantly impressed, and when it ends, *Napoleon* has the papers, and—Oh, audacious Shaw! —the regard of the siren. As the curtain falls, upon a "dual" solitude that is even more than picturesque, one gasps

for a moment or two, and then—well, the intellect has had an outing, and the foggy atmosphere has been cleared.

In this breezy episode, Arnold Daly stamps himself as an artist of subtle perception. His work is far and away ahead of what he did in "Candida." It is clever; it is even brilliant. Shaw, himself, whose eccentric treatment of actors has been so blithely set forth by Mr. Cyril Maude, in that gentleman's history of the Haymarket Theater, would have been eminently satisfied not only with the acting of Mr. Daly, but with that of Miss Dorothy Donnelly, whose dramatic soul, by some peculiar intuition, appears to have been awakened by the Bernard Shaw plays. There are few actresses who could not advantageously study Miss Donnelly in her dalliance with "Candida" and "The Man of Destiny." Ernest Lawford and Edward W. Morrison must not be forgotten in the short list of honors that the performance of this little play presents.

Mr. Daly, I believe, encouraged by his richly deserved success, intends to rush ahead, and serve up Shaw in all styles. It seems that he has acquired the rights to all the works of the fantastic Celt. It is whispered that the young man proposes to tackle the exceedingly risky and problematic play known as "Mrs. Warren's Profession." I say that this is "whispered," but he told me so himself, and—well, I confess to a slight amount of trepidation.

What could the poor critics do with "Mrs. Warren's Profession?" It would be a genuine case of "torn 'mid conflicting emotions." How could they dare to praise a work so subversive of the conventional moralities of the stage? On the other hand, how could they afford to "slate" a piece that is, nevertheless, thoughtful, original and startling? If Mr. Daly should present "Mrs. Warren's Profession," it would be rather interesting to study the view-points of the metropolitan critics. Assuredly there will be some fierce discussion. And who—who could play *Mrs. Warren?* I decline to set forth the name of the lady whom Mr. Daly would secure, if he could!

A strange event of the month was the production, at a matinée, at the Criterion Theater, of a "prize play" by the studious lady known as Martha Morton. There were, it appears, many competitors for this prize, and as "judges," Mr. William Seymour and Mr. F. Marion Crawford, were proudly announced. The critical acumen of these gentlemen will not be enhanced, I should say, by their selection of "The Triumph of Love." It seems incredible that the other plays could have been worse, though as there could be no appeal from the verdict of these judges, we are bound to believe that they were.

Miss Morton, in her day, has done some excellent work for the stage, and there was pathos, not only in the fact, that in view of her successes she should have been impelled to the "prize play" will-o'-the-wisp, but also in the singular garishness of "The Triumph of Love." This playwright, it would seem, must have been devoting her leisure moments to swallowing the symbols of Ibsen in capsule form. She tried to emulate in a parrot-y way, some of the meaningless phraseology of the eminent Scandinavian, but of his triumphant dramatic instinct, she has assimilated nothing. Gaudy types, highly colored puppets, marionettes with the strings in evidence, alleged men and women gurgling high-falutin' utterances, mutterances and stutterances—these were the features of "The Triumph of Love." This being the "prize play," I had an irresistible yearning to see the staging of what Messrs. William Seymour and F. Marion Crawford considered the "booby."

The popular novel by the late Frank Norris, called "The Pit," was captured by the stage primarily because it called for a "mob." Managers believe, with an undying zest, in the efficacy of a "mob." The "mob," to the manager, is what doublet-and-hose is to the "star" actress. Few producers can resist the dulcet temptation of staging several hundred gentlemen drilled in the art of rampaging, and shouting, in the ecstasies of fine frenzy.

The "mob" in "The Pit" comes on

late—but it is worth waiting for. In justice to Mr. William A. Brady, who is something more than a mere "commercial" manager, it must be admitted that the "wheat" scene, in the Chicago Board of Trade, in this dramatization by Mr. Channing Pollock, is handled very effectively indeed. It gives one a thrill. This seething, howling assemblage of speculative fiends arouses one's "fighting blood."

To the average citizen, the methods of the Board of Trade may be as pure Sanskrit. Much of the jargon uttered in "the pit" may be as unintelligible as the hieroglyphics on Cleopatra's needle. Humanity in a state of cyclonic excitement, however, calls for no key, and necessitates the asking of no questions. This Mr. Brady knew. "Wheat" was as good an excuse as any other for staging a mob, and the episode in "The Pit" met with due success.

As a play, it seemed a somewhat insipid dramatic dilution, but you were not asked to dwell upon its lack of real stamina. Pictures of the Auditorium Theater, Chicago, in the throes of grand opera, and of the "lawn" of a Chicago mansion during the progress of a rehearsal of an "open air" performance of "Romeo and Juliet," distracted the attention from the flabby issues of the piece, provided that the attention could ever have reached them. And before we had made up our minds, that as a play "The Pit" was but a shade better than the Drury Lane thingummies occasionally imported for our de-gustation, on came the mob.

This is an odd public. We can sit for hours watching any old thing if we can only know that our reward will assuredly come in the shape of a three-minutes' thrill before it is time to go home. Three minutes is all that we want. We are willing to be bored for three hours, for the sweet sake of those three minutes. We like to wait; to anticipate; to prepare ourselves for the little shock that we covet; to abide mentally unhung, while a brief palpitation is being arranged. While "The Pit" did not bore, its fate, without its mob, can be swiftly imagined. Mr. Brady gave us our

thrill-while-we-waited, in due course, and we were grateful. No finer mob scene had been viewed in this city, and while most of us would probably avoid crossing the street if we knew that we could inspect a similar mob on the other side, we are perfectly willing to pay out our pelf to see it in a playhouse.

As Mr. Zangwill once said, people love things in their wrong place, and are quite disposed to go mad with joy over a locomotive on the stage, though they could see it every day for nothing, in its proper place, on the railroad track. It is quite extraordinary, when you come to think of it, although it is not new. *Mr. Vincent Crummles*, and his famous pump, are almost historical, and not so very long ago, "tank" plays, in which real water was offered as an inducement to a public that, outside the theater, is by no means rigidly "temperance," were all the rage. The stage seems to illuminate the ordinary, and perhaps it is a good thing that it does.

James K. Hackett came to the very western edge of New York's extreme north, in a new play called "The Crown Prince." The presentation of a new play in this district was a trifle unusual, and is said to have been due to managerial "politics." Mr. Hackett is a member of a faction that calls itself "independent." The downtown playhouses appear to belong to another faction. The matter lacks interest to the uninitiated, and is not particularly vital even to the initiated. It is dinned into our ears perpetually, but the wise man cries: "A plague on both your houses!" and declines to meddle with questions that should be beyond the pale of his theatrical allurement.

"The Crown Prince" was the work of Mr. George H. Broadhurst, and may be aptly described as "one of those things" dealing with mock-heroic people, in imaginary realms, according to the rules laid down long ago, by Mr. Anthony Hope, in that terribly contagious book-play, "The Prisoner of Zenda." The germs of "Zenda" have never been exterminated from our theater. They still lurk, latent but menacing, and are hatched into life periodically.

## FOR BOOK LOVERS

THE recent announcements of fiction made by the leading publishers indicate no radical change in the general trend of the public taste.

An analysis of a list of a dozen novels, published during the fall and winter, said to be most in demand during the past few weeks, taken together with a list of late winter and spring books, will demonstrate the fact that in general character new fiction is following the same course as heretofore. Although we recognize the danger of undertaking to crystallize in precise terms the classification of novels—a danger arising from the widely differing views of any given number of readers—we purpose here to submit a list of the recent "best sellers" which it is to be presumed, everyone has read, and offer our reviews of new books this month by way of comparison.

Whether our readers agree with us or not they will find the process an interesting one.

The twelve books to which we have referred are the following, arranged according to the most reliable reports: "The Deliverance," by Ellen Glasgow; "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm," by Kate Douglas Wiggin; "The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come," by John Fox, Jr.; "The Call of the Wild," by Jack London; "My Friend Prospero," by Henry Harland; "Cherry," by Booth Tarkington; "The Mettle of the Pasture," by James Lane Allen; "Colonel Carter's Christmas," by F. Hopkinson Smith; "The Heart of Rome," by F. Marion Crawford; "The Fortunes of Fifi," by Molly Elliot Seawell; "Sir Henry Morgan, Buccaneer," by Cyrus Townsend Brady, and "The Sherrods," by George Barr McCutcheon.

Without applying any rigid rule of classification it will not be at all diffi-

cult to recognize some of the more obvious types as appearing in both lists.

The historical novel and the so-called nature book are both represented—apparently negativing the theory that interest in this class of stories is waning—two of the former being on our list of new books, but none of the latter. Stories of personal idiosyncracy—character novels—as well as romances are included in both. The sort of novel which may be called, for want of a better name, the novel of commerce, the type to which "The Pit" and "Calumet Kay" belong, appears among the new books, but is wanting in the other, a fact, by the way, of more significance than may at first appear, for it is toward the development of the theme of these stories in one shape or another, that the attention of the critics seems to be turning. There is also the fact at least worth referring to that the novel which leads the rest in popularity is one which may be fairly called a sectional story, though it is entirely possible that its success may be due to a wholly different cause.

But after all, has there ever been any substantial ground for supposing that the reception of a novel by the reading public is determined by the character of the theme with which it deals? We listen to a good deal of more or less learned talk about schools of fiction, but is the public really very much interested in that sort of thing? There has been, it is true, fads in novel writing which critics have encouraged and publishers have done much to popularize—even now some well-known houses seem disposed to make a specialty of certain brands of books, to use a common business expression. But it seems to us a mistaken policy to rely too much on the permanency of what is more likely than

not to prove but a whim of public taste. It is our belief that the reading public will always welcome with open arms the really good story whose characters are flesh and blood men and women with sufficient vitality to give a genuine atmosphere to the book and are capable of working out the plot themselves—regardless of what the environment may be. In short, a book that has been written because it had to be written; because its author could not, if he would, suppress it.

A. S. Barnes & Co. announce not only the publication of "Cap'n Eri," by Joseph C. Lincoln, but the issue of a second edition within a week.

Though Mr. Lincoln has enjoyed wide popularity through the appearance of his short stories in AINSLEE'S and other magazines, and his volume of "Cape Cod Ballads," this is his first attempt at novel writing, and it shows the results of a faithful apprenticeship. It will probably prove to be a surprise to those—if indeed there are any such—who supposed that Mr. Lincoln's talent was that of a writer of short stories only. For he shows here the inventiveness and imagination, the restraint in plot development, and the coherence in characterization of a seasoned writer of novels; and this is rather remarkable in the case of one whose reputation is chiefly that of a humorist. There is humor in this tale, plenty of it, and it is of the genuine kind which provokes a laugh from the solitary reader—which is perhaps the best test of humor—it is spontaneous and sane, and never diverts the interest from the main thread of the story.

But this story is something more than a mere vehicle for the expression of Mr. Lincoln's humorous sense. It has an ingeniously worked out plot in which all the necessary ingredients of action, drama and character are judiciously combined and molded together into one organic whole, with a nice sense of proportion.

Capt. Eri, of course, occupies the center of the stage throughout, and to anyone familiar with the New England

coast he appears as a living, breathing man. A retired sea captain, he lives with two of his cronies, Capt. Jerry Burgess and Capt. Perez Ryder at Orham, and their domestic difficulties and devices enliven the opening pages of the book. Their decision to reduce the chaos to order by the introduction of a woman's influence into the household, a blessing for which Capt. Jerry is offered as a sacrifice, gives the first impetus to the forward movement of the story. Martha Snow, Ralph Hazeltine and Elsie Preston are successively brought in, each contributing his or her share of interest, adding vitality and accelerating the movement. The characteristic life of a New England coast village with its quaint people is shown with such skill as to give a harmonious setting to these characters. Ralph and Elsie combine to make a pretty love story.

Capt. Eri will naturally suggest David Harum—the characters are meant; the two books have nothing in common. He is strong, shrewd, kindly, prosperous, but not rich, ready with his sympathy when it is needed, but never failing to appreciate a humorous situation, always sane and wholesome. While he is important enough to give his name to the book, yet there is no impression of its having been laboriously built up around his character as is the case with David Harum; the rest of the book is as necessary to the story as Capt. Eri himself.

Mr. Lincoln has shown his originality in not overloading his pages with sea talk.

The book is tastefully illustrated by Charlotte Weber, whose drawings are full of character.

The atmosphere that made "Elizabeth and Her German Garden" a success pervades the new book by the same author just published by Macmillan.

"The Adventures of Elizabeth in Rügen" is a protest—possibly unintentional—against the austereities of the strenuous life; it preaches the gospel of relaxation which seems to be somewhat discredited in these days, but per-

haps for that very fact is all the more alluring. There is no evidence that Elizabeth herself pretends to assume any such rôle—indeed the obvious absence of a purpose to point a moral adds to the book's charm; it teaches its lesson without any of the dry arts of the pedagogue. Those who understand her will join in the mood in which she says that "to sit there and look out into what Whitman calls the huge and thoughtful night was a comely and sufficient occupation for the best part of me; and as for the rest, the inferior or domestic part, the fingers that might have been busy, the tongue that might have wagged, the superficial bit of brain in daily use for the planning of trivialities, how good it is that all should often be idle."

Rügen, she says, is Germany's biggest island, and her wish to visit it was inspired by Marianne North's "Recollections of a Happy Life." Looking for a guide to Rügen, she found "this remarkable paragraph":

"Hearest thou the name of Rügen, so doth a wondrous spell come over thee. Before mine eyes it rises as a dream of far-away beauteous fairy lands. Images and figures of long ago beckon thee across the marvelous places where in gray prehistoric times they dwelt, and on which they have left the shadow of their presence. And in thee stirs a mighty desire to wander over the glorious, legend-surrounded island. Cord up, then, thy light bundle, take to heart Shylock's advice to put money in thy purse, and follow me without fear of the threatening seasickness, which may overtake thee on the short crossing, for it has never yet done anyone more harm than imposing on him a rapidly passing discomfort."

Her eleven days on the island brought no disappointments; she saw and felt all that was promised; and she tells of it here with the grace of a cultivated woman, tempering her refinement, however, with humor, and coloring her observations upon people and places and customs with a touch of good-natured cynicism which emphasizes her deep sympathy with human nature.

Her failure to persuade any of her friends to brave the grim claws of conventionality, and make the trip with her on foot, forced her to take her carriage and the faithful Gertrud.

A great help to the intelligent and appreciative reading of the book is afforded by a map upon which her route is marked.

Human nature has always, and probably will have always, a weakness for stories chronicling the steps leading to great achievements from humble beginnings, because they are arrived at in the face of innumerable difficulties, and probably American human nature has the warmest appreciation of that sort of thing.

This fact ought to go far in spreading the popularity of "Tillie, a Mennonite Maid," by Helen Reimensnyder Martin, Century Company.

If the conditions of the Dutch farm life of Pennsylvania into which Tillie was born are fairly described, it is hardly possible to conceive of any more hopeless state of mental and moral servitude than that which she endured—all the more galling because existing in the midst of comparative material prosperity. That the offspring of parents who were themselves a part of such an environment should be inspired to seek emancipation from such a slavery, or seeking it should compass it seems hardly plausible; but still the narrative is handled so skillfully that the reader has none of the feeling of skepticism which is roused by the setting up of artificial obstacles.

The story of the successive steps by which Tillie lifted herself out of this Pennsylvania slough of despond and developed from a miserable, ignorant, timid child, overawed and suppressed by abuse, into a cultivated and self-reliant woman, engages and holds the attention throughout.

Tillie's pretty love story, which begins to develop in the latter half of the book, sustains and carries to the end an interest which might otherwise begin to flag at the continuation of the bare recital of her wrongs.

Florence Scovel Shinn has some attractive illustrations.

A book of a type about which there can be no possible disagreement, and which at the same time possesses all the virtues of a thoroughly interesting story, is Elizabeth Miller's Egyptian romance, "The Yoke," Bobbs-Merrill Company. Its title page carries the additional information that it is "a romance of the days when the Lord redeemed the children of Israel from the bondage of Egypt."

Readers who remember the fascination of George Ebers' books fifteen or twenty years ago will be likely to turn to this with the sort of anticipation that is stimulated by the recollection of a past and half-forgotten pleasure; and they will not be disappointed.

The story is absorbing purely as a story and entirely apart from the more or less factitious interest which is apt to be lent to a novel involving in its plot well-known historical characters and events. Such characters and events, of which use is made in "The Yoke" are Moses and Aaron, the plague of Egypt, and the crossing of the Red Sea. All these are woven into a more or less intricate plot, which, nevertheless, is uniformly kept well in hand, and is worked out in a perfectly rational and convincing manner. It is an achievement of not a little difficulty, considering the fact that so much of the material is of a supernatural character.

The tale abounds in dramatic situations, without any suggestion, however, of extravagance; it has a very tender love story, and its coloring is fully equal to that of the Ebers' books or of "Ben Hur." In this respect it shows evidences of very careful work, and the author is to be congratulated on the result.

One is apt to take up a book of fiction based upon letters rather reluctantly. The anticipation of much interest in reading over the letters of utter strangers is not, as a rule, very acute. There have been, however, some notable exceptions, as for instance, "An

Englishwoman's Love Letters" and the "Kempton-Wace Correspondence." To this latter class we think "The Woodhouse Correspondence," Dodd, Mead & Co., undoubtedly belongs, though for very different reasons from those which gave the other two their success.

The central figure in the correspondence is Algernon Wentworth-Woodhouse, a middle-aged widower and a gentleman of inherited wealth, for whose "paternal descent the curious reader is referred to Burke's 'Landed Gentry.'" His gentlemanly physical infirmities, and solitary life had developed a more or less restrained cynicism regarding human nature, particularly the human nature of his needy relatives, though one is inclined to suspect that his cynicism is somewhat temperamental.

The letters are chiefly concerned with appeals for financial assistance made to Mr. Woodhouse by his relatives and a godchild, the daughter of his dearest university friend, and exploit almost exclusively the passion of selfishness. The sordidness of it, however, the authors, George W. Russell and Edith Sichel, have cleverly minimized by the naive certainty which characterizes the demands made upon Mr. Woodhouse and the frankness with which he discusses their motives, the inoffensive vanity with which he repudiates their claims upon him, and the pedantic style in which he conveys unwelcome advice. Humor, somewhat subtle, perhaps, but for that reason delightful to an appreciative reader, marks almost every page.

Ellen Thompson—or Elaine, as she prefers to call herself—the goddaughter, who is writing "a Realistico-Spiritual novel, 'The Woof Warp,'" strikes a note of extravagance which is so apt to crop out in British humor.

Frank Woodhouse, the nephew—a very decent chap—and Barbara Moore, a lady somewhat older, by whom he is looked upon as a sort of protégé, exchange some letters, which throw a pleasant side light on the rest of the correspondence.

The phrase Pastoral Novel may be aptly applied to a dainty little idyl called

"Daphne," by Margaret Sherwood, Houghton, Mifflin & Co. It is the merest little trifle, one of those airy little bubbles of literature, which none the less leave such a pleasant memory behind them. Daphne is a young American girl, who has gone over to visit her sister, the wife of an Italian count. She is left alone for a time on the count's estate with no companions but an old peasant couple, and finds her only solace in long walks alone. One day she meets a stranger, tall and strong and rarely handsome, and tells him that she is Daphne, to which he replies, gravely, that he is Apollo. Of course there are many things that one can say to a Greek god that twentieth century convention would prevent one from saying to a man who has not been introduced.

It deserves to be read and passed on to one's friends.

Following the example set by Frank Norris and Stewart White, Robert Shackleton has written a book of the commercial type, "The Great Adventurer," Doubleday, Page & Co. According to the publishers, "Newbury Linn, the 'great adventurer,' carries the idea of combination to its logical conclusion and forms the Colossal Trust of Trusts, beside which the Standard Oil or Steel combinations are merely beginnings."

In spite of a certain kind of interest which the story provokes, it is apt to be dulled by some very glaring faults of construction and style, due to the haste and lack of care with which it seems to have been written. The result is to rob the story of the realism which should be its most essential characteristic, and to leave upon the reader the impression that it is the product of somewhat overstimulated imagination.

The fact of the matter is that the theme, setting and environment of a story are not of nearly so much importance as the characterization; and the peculiar temptation of authors who attempt to write of business life is to make the description of that element predominate at the expense of the actors.

If the material for "The Great Ad-

venturer" had been more thoroughly digested, possibly the finished result would have shown fewer incongruities both in plot and characters.

Mr. Shackleton is said to have made use for the first time in this book of some of his interviews with prominent captains of industry.

The eighth of the series of Macmillan's Little Novels by Favorite Authors is "The Duke of Cameron Avenue," by Henry K. Webster. It must be confessed that Mr. Webster has managed his theme, usually too highly colored in fiction, with a degree of self-control which has produced a convincing story.

It is a mixture of college settlement work and practical politics, and the character of Ramsay, who has made the attempt to combine them, is so attractive by reason of his masculinity, his practical mental vigor and his wide sympathy, as to make the story a very interesting one. His venture into politics is attended with a combination of failure and success that gives it a satisfying air of plausibility. Even the love story is not overwritten.

Altogether it is a bright little tale, and worthy of the place its publishers have given it in their series.

J. J. Bell and the Century Company, apparently encouraged by success of "Wee MacGregor," have combined as author and publisher, as is usual under such circumstances, in putting out another collection of stories of the same general character, and, as is also usual, the second attempt fails to equal the first. "Mrs. M'Lerie" is the title of the new book.

The stories are chiefly conversations, in Scotch dialect, of course, between Mrs. M'Lerie and her friend, Mrs. Munro, dealing with homely, everyday happenings in a quaint fashion, in which some humor and some pathos are mingled. Her views of life are colored by a hopeful philosophy, which is summed up in her unfailing, "Aweel it's a' yin."

It is a little book, and one cannot, therefore, waste much time in reading it.